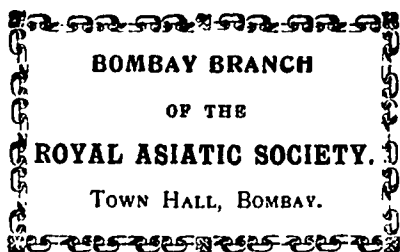




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Yellow Sands

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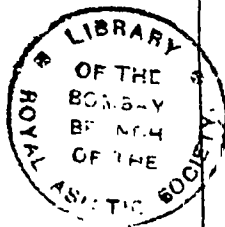
Yellow Sands

by

Adelaide Eden Phillpotts

THE STORY OF THE FAMOUS PLAY
BY
EDEN & ADELAIDE EDEN PHILLPOTTS

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CHAPMAN & HALL'S
CENTENARY YEAR

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DEDICATION

WITH LOVE TO
ALICE AND DRUSILLA WILLS
AND GRATITUDE FOR
THEIR UNIQUE PERFORMANCE
AS THE TWINS IN
"YELLOW SANDS."



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*Published by Chapman and Hall, Ltd., 11 Henrietta Street,
London, W.C.2. Made and Printed in Great Britain by
C. Tinling & Co., Ltd., Liverpool, London, and Prescot.*

IN south-east Devon are many deep combes winding down to the sea, and in one of the most beautiful lies Yellow Sands, a village where fishing and farming share the industry of the people. From the hills to the beach climbs the long green combe, through which a stream runs. Thatched cottages, formed into three main groups, the first of which is a mile from the sea, are threaded along a narrow road, like beads on a string. In the central cluster, as it were the finest jewel of a chain, is an ancient church, dedicated to St. Winifred, and in each of the others stands an inn, the Wheatsheaf and the Fountain Head. The vale opens out on to the sands after which the village is named, a golden beach stretching for a mile, between headlands of limestone and red sandstone which rise on either side of the valley. Black fishing boats are drawn up at the edge of the water or float at anchor, and nets are flung down among the lobster pots to dry. To east and west on a clear day can be seen Start Point and Portland Bill, which form the arms of the bay wherein the hamlet lies. The place has changed little with time and no ugly buildings mar its beauty. It knows not the luxuries of gas and electricity, and the lanes which lead to it are too narrow

to admit the colossal vehicles which bear crowds of trippers from place to place in the summer time. The churchyard is full of the bones of the aged, and in the church is erected a tablet to an inhabitant who lived to be a hundred and three years old.

On a sunny morning in May a stout woman was bending over one of the graves, gardening. As it happened, this monument recorded the name of a person who had lived no more than fifty-one years, an exception in that place. On it was written: "To the loving memory of my dear husband, Arthur Varwell, who departed this life November 3rd, 1915, aged 51 years. Rejoice Evermore."

On the grave grew tulips, wallflowers, forget-me-nots, and stocks, carefully planted in rows, one row inside the other; the whole was surmounted by a marble cross. The stout woman was Mary Varwell, the dead man's wife, one of the more prosperous people of Yellow Sands. She came here regularly once a week, to water and to weed, and to see that her grave was the neatest and the most cultivated in the churchyard.

Mary, a woman of fifty-five, lived with her only son in Three Elms Farm, opposite the church. Her husband met his end nine years before by falling off a mowing machine into the machinery; some said it happened when he was a little more than sober, and a little less than drunk, for he was a man who enjoyed life; but his wife put the accident down to

sunstroke. Though she had never had a good word to say for him in his lifetime, she never said a bad one afterwards, and had lifted him to the position of a saint in her memory. With the help of her son, Arthur, and four or five labourers, she continued to cultivate the farm, and everybody agreed that she ran it more efficiently than her husband had been able to do before.

She was regarding the grave with some vexation when her son appeared carrying a watering-can. He was a tall youth of twenty-four, with a good-natured, rather simple face, light-brown curly hair, and blue eyes, and he wore a gaudy tie and a flower in his button-hole. For the rest he was clad as a yokel, and his boots were red with the dust of the earth. Mary took the can and began to water the flowers on the grave.

"Look here, Arthur!" she said. "That nurseryman to Lydmouth have cheated me again. If they tulips I bought haven't all comed up red, and he swore they was white!"

"I expect that's father's fault!" replied Arthur, laughing. "Red was his favourite colour, you know. His influence have crept into their roots and changed 'em."

"Arthur! I won't have no joking here. I've half a mind to pull them up, they don't chime with the yellow wallflowers. You can't trust nobody nowadays. The man swore they was white—I won't go to him no more. That'll do, you can get home now and finish cutting

the cabbages for market—and see you put aside a good one for your Aunt Jenifer.”

Arthur went off and Mary put some finishing touches to the grave.

Three Elms Farm, the largest in Yellow Sands, was built in the shape of a square; the low thatched house formed two sides, and barns and outbuildings the other two; a white-washed, thatched wall hid the buildings from the road, and behind sloped meadows to the woods which crowned the hill. There was little arable land attached to it, but many acres of pasturage for sheep and cattle, and two large orchards where roamed pigs and fowls. Only one of the elms after which it was named still stood; the others had been blown down in a storm ten years ago and had lain with their branches interlocked, across the road, their crowns in the churchyard opposite. The remaining elm was to come down the following autumn. A small part of the garden was devoted to flowers, primly arranged according to Mary's taste, but by far the greater part contained vegetables, and here, among rows of cabbages, Arthur worked, whistling and frequently pausing to think thoughts not connected with cabbages. Presently he cut one enormous plant for a special purpose—a gift for his old Aunt Jenifer, to whom he took green-stuff and poultry once a week.

Meanwhile Mary finished tending the grave and went into the church for five minutes to cool down. The Varwell pew stood just beneath

a three-decker pulpit, enclosed in the old-fashioned way by a door and high deal sides. Here she had sat every Sunday for thirty years, glorying in the discomfort, and here she reposed now, to offer a prayer for herself: she was a pious woman. The quaint old church, built in the form of a cross, let in the sunlight through clear glass windows. In the centre clustered bell ropes, with long striped handles, looped to the wall; and down the middle hung oil lamps, with opaque shades and polished brass bowls. The vaulted ceiling was white, with black beams, and there were a few aged monuments in the church. The whole was built of white stone and possessed dignity and friendliness. Mary had just finished superintending the spring cleaning of the interior, and now she walked round with a keen eye, to see that her helpers and underlings had not scamped the work. She even took up a hassock or two and slapped them to see if the dirt had all been beaten out of them. The result satisfied her.

She was crossing the road to the farm when she observed an approaching figure, and turned to meet him. An elderly man was advancing and waved his hat to Mary when he saw her. This was Mr. Baslow, the lawyer, and a personality in Yellow Sands. A bachelor of sixty, he had spent nearly all his life in the place, retiring there on account of ill-health, after he had finished his articles, and living until recently with his old mother. He knew everybody, and

the business of everybody ; he loved the place and his work, which was of the simplest nature, and had never exhibited either ambition to migrate to a town or a wish to marry. It was rumoured that he had remained true to the memory of a maiden who had died thirty years ago ; at any rate he had been seen frequently to visit a tomb in a neighbouring churchyard, bearing the name of a young woman who died at the age of twenty. Mr. Baslow, known by all as Mr. B., was mild and trustworthy and tender-hearted and had no enemies, by no means the usual type of lawyer, and he took a personal interest in everybody at Yellow Sands. He lived in a little house near the sea, and since his mother's death had only one maid-servant to look after him. Mary Varwell was an old acquaintance of his, and she never lost an opportunity of conversing with him.

"I've been wanting to see you, Mr. B.," she began. "Come in and take a bit of dinner with us to-day. Arthur's home and he always says 'tis a pleasure to talk to you, you're that clever after the other folk here, and can talk about more than fish and fowls. Arthur have ideas you know, and reads the newspapers and sees sense. Not like his bad cousin, Joe, who sees naught but wickedness, and preaches revolution in 'the land."

"Sorry I can't come in to-day, Mary ; I'm going to Lydmouth this afternoon."

"Then I'll walk a little way to your home," said Mary, and they went along. Clearing her

throat, she said with an air of inconsequence :

" I suppose Miss Jenifer Varwell haven't said nothing more to you about making her will, Mr. B. ? "

" She has not, Mary."

" And her eighty come October—'tis flying in the face of Providence. Not that it's any business of mine ; but for her own peace of mind you'd think she'd do it. And after all 'tis only fair to Arthur. Can't you give her a hint, Mr. B. ? 'Tis part of your duty, I should think. Us all knows what old people are ; and, though I've tried more than once to put her into the mood to do it, she's that obstinate and mysterious, and just wags her head and changes the subject. But if you was to try—not that I want to interfere ; but us all knows what would happen if she died without making her will. That good-for-naught Richard would get all, every halfpenny—and him the old boozier he is and all. So just put in a word, Mr. B. Nobody wants Aunt Jenifer to live more than I do ; I'd like to see her here for the next ten year and more ; but at her age you never know—she might get a chill any day, sitting by the sea as she do. She might be took sudden, God bless her. Well—you understand how it is, Mr. B. She likes you—you can influence her. And if you go in and see her to-day, tell her Arthur's coming down later on, and I dare say I'll look in myself to cheer her up. At her age a body needs cheering. I must go back now. Good day ! You're quite well, I hope ? "

"Quite, thanks, Mary. Good morning."

They parted and she went home smiling to herself, already picturing the interview between Mr. Baslow and Aunt Jenifer.

But the lawyer did not visit Miss Varwell that day, and when he did the subject of the will was not mentioned.

SOON after dinner Mary Varwell packed a basket of provisions for Arthur to take to his aunt, and sent him off; but instead of going straight to Sea View Cottage, where she lived near the sea, he diverged in another direction, with a different aim.

Thecombe of Yellow Sands opened out between lofty cliffs to the sea, where the stream lost itself in a sandy pool, encircled by water-plants and nettles. Here stood a few cottages, one of which belonged to Mr. Thomas Major, the most prosperous fisherman in the place. He owned two boats, and employed six men, one of whom was Joe Varwell, Arthur's first cousin. Mr. Major's cottage opened right on to the strand, and it was here that Arthur was bound. But some time before he appeared, another member of the Varwell clan had reached the spot and thrown himself down against an upturned rowing boat, to enjoy the sunshine.

Mr. Richard Varwell was Arthur's uncle, brother to Miss Jenifer, and, in a way, the wisest and most famous person in Yellow Sands. A laughing philosopher, a sort of benevolent Diogenes, he lived in a wooden hut on the edge of the beach, where he did everything for himself, and largely depended for provisions and comforts

on the generosity of neighbours. He was known as "Tumble-down-Dick," and spent more than half his time at the Fountain Head and the Wheatsheaf. But on sunny days like this he loved to bask on the sand.

As a physical object he was picturesque: his garments hung about him raggedly; the soles of his shoes had almost parted company with their uppers, and his toes saw daylight through the toecaps. A hat which had belonged to a yachtsman twenty years ago adorned his thin and straggling hairs, his nose was red, his eyes somewhat lazy and bleared with liquor, and of teeth he had few. Yet, in spite of all these shortcomings, there was nothing sordid about him, within or without; on the contrary there was something positively inspiring—he was the most popular man in the village. Only one person hated him, and that was his sister-in-law, Mary. She was a woman who saw rags as rags, and a red nose as a red nose, and laziness as laziness, and all these things as a disgrace and a shame.

Dick Varwell smoked a clay pipe and pushed his hat off his forehead. His meditation was interrupted by the appearance of Mr. Major's daughter, Emma, who came singing out of the cottage with a bowl of potatoes under her arm. She was a tall girl of twenty-two, with a mass of curly red hair. Seating herself on a bench she began to peel the potatoes, and seeing Mr. Varwell, threw a piece of skin into his lap to rouse him.

"What ho, Emma!" he cried.

"Good morning, Mr. Varwell," said she.

"A very good morning indeed—to soak in the sun."

"If you never soaked in nothing but the sun, the people would think higher of you," said Emma.

"The people—the poor people! Don't talk to me about the people on a morning like this. Let the people go their ways and I'll go mine."

Richard rolled over and stretched his limbs, yawning.

Emma laughed and said:

"Why be you so lazy, I wonder? Look at father now—he's not much younger than you—yet work's his life."

"Lazy—me? My work's never done; but it's done here!"

He tapped his forehead and winked.

"If the brain's busy what do the body matter? You can't have it both ways. Your father's different."

"Father grants you've got a lot of intellects—like Joe."

"Me like Joe? Not me! The difference between me and Joe's the difference between a wise man and a fool."

"Joe's all against the rich right enough—a Socialist he calls himself—but there may be wisdom in that."

"Don't you believe it! Don't you listen to him, Emma. Where is he this morning?"

"Out on the water for his crab pots."

"A most dangerous pattern of man, because he's in earnest. I've explained to him till I'm tired that democracy won't do. 'Tis contrary to nature. Man's mostly an idiot by the will of God, and nobody's any damn use unless he's got somebody better to watch him. False education be at the root of the trouble, Emma—the nation's being educated all wrong."

"Father says education don't count."

"There you are, then! It don't, but it ought to. Take me. If I'd had a proper education, Emma, I might have risen to be Prime Minister of England."

"You'd have had to work then, anyhow!" said Emma.

"I'd have made others do the work while I did the thinking."

"Ain't thinking work?"

"My sort of work, yes."

"Joe's a thinker, anyway—and a doer too. He's all for a revolution."

"He listens to the Red man, and thinks that noise be truth, whereas truth be silent more often than not—or a 'still small voice.' But I'm going to make Joe see sense one day; there's only me can do it in this place. My sister Jenifer be worrying over him terrible."

"Father thinks the world of Miss Jenifer. So do everybody, come to that."

"And right too. Me and Jenifer be the only clever Varwells. All the rest be as God made 'em—the usual pattern of shadows that most men and women are. Strange to say she don't

think much of me all the same, because I put mind above matter. But the dreamers we must have ; I'm one of those old men praised in the Bible what dreams dreams ; and them what makes their dreams come true be the salt of the earth."

"Have you made your dreams come true, Mr. Varwell ?"

Richard looked at her, and said.

"I have and I haven't, Emma."

"But some must work, I suppose ?"

"Let them that can't dream work for them that can."

At this moment a whistle, that sounded like a signal, was heard in the distance, and Richard said :

"Here comes another sort of dreamer, but his dreams are only about girls."

Emma blushed and answered.

"Arthur Varwell ? He's like you, however, a Conservative."

"He'll own a farm and have a stake in the land some day ; yet nothing matters to him now but females and you in particular."

"Me !" cried Emma.

"As if you didn't know. A very great fool is Arthur, but rather a nice fool—there he is."

Arthur was seen dawdling round the Major's cottage ; but now he caught sight of his uncle and Emma on the beach and hurried forward. On his arm he swung a large basket of green-stuff and a fowl. He set this down and cried out :

"Hullo, Emma! Hullo, Uncle Dick! Found something to lean against, I see."

"Your uncle was telling me things about you, Arthur," said Emma.

"Naught but good, I reckon," said he.

"Said you was a very great fool."

"But rather a nice fool," put in Richard.
"That's more than most fools are. Facts are facts, my poor fellow."

He rose and pulled his cap over his nose, stretching again like some old cat getting off a wall.

"You'll always want a clever woman to run your show; but the trouble is no clever one will ever take you."

Emma burst out laughing, and Arthur said:

"I've got mother. She's clever, ain't she?"

"Yes," said Dick Varwell, "you've got your wonderful mother. But the time's coming when you ought to settle down and look ahead. There's only Joe and you left to carry on the famous name of Varwell in Yellow Sands, and when he marries he'll breed anarchists; and when you do, you'll breed rabbits—not very hopeful for the race. However, a bright wife might save you, if she's the right one."

"Ah! the 'right one'!" said Arthur, looking slyly at Emma, who laughed and said:

"There's such a lot of choice, isn't there?"

"I've made mine," Arthur replied.

He began whistling again and rattling money in his trouser pocket. This sound had a magical effect on Uncle Dick, who said:

"That reminds me, it's time I took my medicine at the Wheatsheaf, Arthur. Lend me half-a-crown! The super tax took my last stiver yesterday."

Arthur slapped him on the shoulder and asked:

"D'you know how much you owe me, Uncle Dick? Two pounds five shillings is my score against you."

"Be proud of it, my boy! You've had my wisdom for nothing ever since you was born."

Arthur gave him half-a-crown, and the old man shuffled away in the direction of the nearer of the two inns, the Wheatsheaf. Turning round he blew them a kiss and waved his hat. Then he appropriated a fine cos lettuce from Arthur's basket, and disappeared.

"Well, I'm blowed," said Arthur. "What are you to do with a fellow like that?"

"I like him. He's always got a laugh up his sleeve."

"And Joe's always got a growl."

"There's his boat coming in."

"He won't be here yet. Pitch for five minutes and have a tell with me."

"All right, I will."

They both jumped on to the keel of the boat against which Mr. Varwell had been leaning, and sat facing each other.

"Where was you going?" asked Emma.

"To Aunt Jenifer. Mother sends her our titbits once a week."

"Poor old dear!"

"Rich old dear! Mother's always on to her

about making a will—I reckon she'll leave her stuff to charity. Well—I'd better be going on I suppose."

They paused, sighed and looked away from each other.

"How's your mother?" Emma asked.

"She's all right. She likes you."

"Do she? She don't like many people."

"She likes you though."

Emma stared out to sea where a fishing boat was heading for the land, and Arthur said,

"Did you hear what Uncle Dick said just now?"

"I heard."

"To find a wife for my salvation."

"But he said no clever one would take you."

"I'd like to marry a clever one."

"Why?"

"Oh—I don't know—then she could help me to reform Uncle Dick."

"Can't your mother reform him?"

"She's tried and failed. They hate each other."

"You do hate people if you can't reform them."

"Emma," said Arthur. "Might I ask if you'll come to Lydmouth with me next Monday? 'Tis Bank Holiday and I've been wishful to invite you ever since last Boxing Day."

"Perhaps I will then, Arthur—but I'll decide later on."

The sea was pale and milky and so calm that

not a ripple rolled on the sand; a few gulls mewed round Joe's fishing boat which was about to run onto the beach. The sun, pouring down on Emma's hair, turned it into a bush of gold and caused tiny freckles to appear on her nose. She wore a blue print dress open at the neck, and her sleeves were rolled above her elbows, Arthur felt inspired to say:

"When the sun shines on your hair, Emma, it makes it look like my beech tree in the autumn."

"Like your carrots in the autumn, you mean," she replied, laughing and tossing the curls with pride.

"Carrots be damned—'tis 'half copper, half gold. I always swore I'd marry a red girl. They've drawn me for years!"

"Oh, they have, have they!" cried Emma.

"Yes; and in my opinion you red girls are full of fine character, though cruel short-tempered."

"You've studied us pretty close, then!"

"Red girls is rarer than they used to be. Queer thing that."

"There's Joe landing," said Emma, turning away and pointing to the spot where a fisherman was wading ashore.

"I wonder now," went on Arthur, taking no notice, "with the sun so bright and the sea so calm—if you could give a chap a kiss, Emma?"

But Emma ignored this suggestion, and said:

"For looks now, you wouldn't say I could

hold a candle to Lydia Blake, Miss Varwell's little maid ? ”

“ Lyddy ! Good Lord ! She's as pale as straw, Lyddy is—moon to your sun. What about that kiss ? ”

“ Kissing's silly, Arthur.”

“ Not my kissing. When I kiss, a girl knows it. You was made to kiss. Why should the sun do all the kissing ? ”

He put his arms round her ; she drew back, then she came a little closer, then pushed him away again. Meantime the young fisherman, with a string of fish over his shoulder and a basket of crabs in his hand, was coming towards them.

“ Yes—you may—no, you may not. Let me think,” cried Emma.

“ Kiss first and think after,” said Arthur, kissing her.

JOE stood over six feet high, and was notable for good looks and grievances. He was dark within and without ; a mass of black hair hung over his forehead ; his eyes were deep brown under contracted brows, and his chin was square and set and often thrust out doggedly in defence of one thing and another. There was a tradition that he had never smiled ; at any rate nobody in Yellow Sands had ever seen a smile on his face, and there was a joke against him that he could not smile if he tried.

When he observed the affectionate little scene on the boat, he flung down his fish and his crab pot, scowled, and called out,

"Chuck that, Arthur, or I'll put it across you."

Emma jumped down and stood facing him with her hands on her hips and said,

"Arthur was saying the sun got all the kissing, Joe."

"'Kissing' ! Why didn't you scratch his stupid face down ?" said Joe, with scorn.

"What's a woman's nails for, if she can't protect herself ?"

"Lord, Joe !" exclaimed Arthur. "Haven't you ever kissed a girl ? Don't the Socialists ever kiss each other, or be they only built to bite the rich ?"

"You laugh," sneered Joe, "but you'll laugh t'other side of your stupid face one day. Go about your business, Emma, and work for your living like an honest woman, and don't play about with no capitalist."

"Me a capitalist!" shouted Arthur, roaring with fun. "I work on the land so well as ever you work on the sea, Joe. It's just as hard work growing 'taters as catching crabs."

"Why ban't you along with your 'taters now, then?"

"The Lord's looking after my 'taters this afternoon, Joe, and I'm on the way to Aunt Jenifer, with a few nice green things."

"One damn capitalist going to visit another. After the cash, of course, like all the rest be."

"My goodness gracious, Joe," said Emma. "What's took you to-day? Have a crab nipped you? One day you'll catch yourself in your own crab pot, and everybody'll say: 'Good Lord, what a monstrous fine crab! He's fit for the King; we'll send him to Buckingham Palace for supper!' Then where'll you be?"

"You silly fool! Go about your business."

"I know what's the matter!" cried Arthur. "Joe's in love! I know the signs. I'll bet you a dollar Joe's gone on a girl! Find a nice patient maiden and chuck politics, Joe. She'll larn you what's better. You might be a very good husband if you was broke in and taught to be hopeful. And why shouldn't I drop in and cheer Aunt Jenifer a bit? There ain't no

law against brightening your old relatives, is there?"

"I won't brighten no capitalists," growled Joe.

"You won't brighten nobody," said Emma. "You'd knock all the fun out of life, you would!"

"Fun! You talk of 'fun', and a million men out of work! There ain't no room for fun, nor yet love-making, in the world nowadays."

But Emma replied:

"Love will creep in, Joe, even though there's a million men on the dole."

"It won't creep anywhere near me, anyhow," declared Joe. "'Tis all tomfoolery and idleness, and I hate it and won't have naught to do with it."

"It won't have naught to do with you, I should think!" laughed Arthur, rising to go. "Talk sense to him, Emma. I'll see you again, when this prophet Jonah be preaching somewhere else. And remember Whit Monday. 'Hullo!' he cried, taking up his basket. "If Uncle Dick haven't pinched that brave cos lettuce! You set to work on Uncle Dick, Joe. He's the worst sort of capitalist—always after someone else's capital."

And Arthur set off again for Aunt Jenifer's cottage, leaving Joe and Emma on the beach.

"'Tis a wonder Arthur don't lose his temper with you, Joe," said she.

"Bah! He ain't got no temper," answered

Joe, kicking the boat. "He ain't got nothing. Arthur's like fish without salt—worthless!"

"Don't say that, Joe. How's the catch?"

"Catch is all right," said Joe, opening the basket. "There's naught wrong with the sea."

"The sea always makes you happy."

"So it do. The sea's honest and the sea's generous."

Joe gazed out over the sea and his face softened, but the next moment it hardened again; he ground his boots in the sand and went on:

"If I was catching they crabs for the hungry, I'd be happy, Emma; but every time I get a whopper I thinks: 'Some damn capitalist will eat him', and I be half in a mind to put him back."

Emma laughed and answered.

"The capitalists have got to eat, Joe."

"Why?" he burst out. "Why should any man eat as don't work? Eating and working go together. And there's lots—the only work they do is to eat."

"Lor' Joe! Even the pigs rest sometimes."

She took up her bowl of potatoes and was going into the cottage when Joe pulled her back and said:

"Tell me this: was you going to let Arthur kiss you?"

"Well—if I was?" asked Emma, throwing back her head.

"Then 'twas a very wanton thing, and I'm ashamed of 'ee!"

" 'Tisn't your business, Joe. And what would you do if you cared for a girl? "

" A love-hunting rip—that's what Arthur is."

Emma flared up and cried out:

" You ain't got nothing fair or honest against Arthur."

" Oh, yes, I have," declared Joe.

" What then? Let's hear it. You're clever—nobody doubts that, though you ain't very large-hearted."

" Not large-hearted—me? " exclaimed Joe, staring at her. " That's a lie! "

" Never mind about your heart then. What about Arthur's? "

" Well then, he's got the heart of a polygamist, if you must know."

" A poly-gamist? What's that? Sounds like a fish."

" Nothing so honest as a fish," answered Joe. " A poly-gamist's a man that would have fifty wives if he could afford to keep 'em—and wouldn't care whose wives they was neither."

" Oh! What a wicked thing to say against Arthur! " burst out Emma, turning scarlet with anger and shame.

" Don't you know him? " said Joe. " What about Lucy Manders and Daisy Groom and Fanny Foster to Lydmouth, and Nellie Maine to Exeter? Is that a faithful man? "

" He was faithful to red hair anyway—all red girls, come to think of it! "

"Keep off him—that's what I say. Keep off the men. This beastly world's no place for nice little children to come into. If I was a woman I'd blush to bring a babby into such a blasted world."

"You do cast one down," said Emma.

"That's what I be here for—that's my job—to cast people down. I want to make Yellow Sands know a bit about the wicked injustice everywhere. I want to make the men, women and children shout out for the revolution! I'd like to see the guillotine set up on this here beach, I would, and I wouldn't say but what Arthur might be one of the first to see his silly head rolling in the sand!"

"I properly hate you this morning, Joe," said Emma, turning her back on him and going into the cottage.

He remained for a moment staring at the beach, where he had pictured Arthur's head rolling, then shouldered his fish and went off with the basket towards the village.

Once a week he called at all the houses in Yellow Sands to sell fish for his master. From door to door he went, a sullen, brooding figure, with a smile for no one, yielding to each housewife some part of his morning's catch. The cottages, separated from the road by tiny gardens in which bloomed tulips and wall-flowers, were nearly all built of cob, whitewashed and thatched; the doors opened into the kitchens, and children and kittens were often to be found playing on the steps. Joe passed

the old forge and the wooden hut which served as a public hall and billiard room for the villagers. He had been trying to get this hall for a Socialist meeting in the near future, but the vicar and Mr. Baslow were against the plan, and he smarted under their opposition.

On the way to the cottage of his aunt, Miss Varwell, he passed Arthur returning from her with his empty basket.

"Hullo!" cried Arthur. "Go in and have a chat with Aunt Jenny. She's just been asking me about you, and I told her you called her a something capitalist; and she said: 'Why don't he come and say it to my face? He's welcome.' She'd get to like you if you let her. I've promised to go in again this evening and play a game of whist with her and Lyddy. 'Tis her favourite game. Why don't you join us and make four?"

"Like your impudence to ask me! I won't go near her. And if your mother wants some fish to-day, you can take it to her, because I won't go near her neither."

"Right-o! Give me the great sea serpent I see coiled in your basket. Out with him!"

Joe jerked away in exasperation, but Arthur caught hold of the string of fish over his shoulder and demanded two plaice, which his cousin sold him with an ill grace. Then Joe tramped down the valley to the cottage of Miss Jenifer Varwell, on a rise above the shore.

This little house, which stood in half an acre of land, had belonged to the Varwell

family for two hundred years. Round the porch grew honeysuckle and roses, and wistaria climbed about the window-sills. In the garden mingled flowers and vegetables, gooseberry bushes and apple trees. The front windows looked on to the sea, and from the back could be seen the lovely combe ascending to the hills.

The door stood open when Joe arrived, and just inside hung a large coloured print of Queen Victoria. Joe glared at this portrait and rapped loudly on the door. His summons was answered by Lydia Blake, Miss Jenifer's maid-of-all-work, a pretty little fair creature, who blushed when she looked up and saw Joe.

He frowned at her and asked if Miss Varwell wanted any fish, to which she responded by calling into the cottage.

"Here's Mr. Joe, Miss Jenifer; what'll 'e take this afternoon? He's got some fine plaice and mackerel."

"Take two mackerel, Lyddy, and ax him to come in," came an old, shrill voice from indoors.

"Two mackerel then, please, Mr. Joe, and do 'e step in and see Miss Varwell a minute."

"Not I," said Joe, giving her the fish. "I ain't no company for her."

"Oh, do come in," begged Lydia. "'Twill give her such pleasure."

But Joe reflected that Arthur had just been here, and would be coming again, and he refused to stop.

" 'Tisn't kind of you," said Lydia. " You might pleasure her sometimes."

" And don't I? I took her out for a row last week, and I will again."

He had gone some way down the garden path when he called out:

" Here, I want a word with you, Lydia Blake."

" With me, Joe?" said Lydia, running up to him.

" Yes—with you. I'll thank you to meet me in the churchyard to-morrow night at half after nine, and look you're on time."

" The churchyard? Not a cheerful place to meet, Joe."

" Quite cheerful enough for what I've got to say," said he.

To hide her confusion Lydia said:

" All right, Joe. And when be you going to bring Miss Jenifer a nice crab again for her supper?"

" Crabs—with a million men on the dole!" exclaimed Joe. " Here, pick one for yourself."

And he opened the basket. Lydia selected a small crab and smiled at him.

" Thank you, Joe. I'll tell her what you said!"

" Tell her you made me do it," he said, hastening away.

Lydia ran back into the cottage.

Miss Jenifer Varwell sat in the parlour overlooking the sea, her feet on a carved stool, a grey shawl over her shoulders. Though bent

and thin she was still a stately figure, and her old countenance retained some of the fire and beauty for which she was famous in the past. She was no ruin in her age, but a weather-beaten monument that had withstood the storms of seventy-nine years. Like the excellent old pieces of mahogany furniture, and notably the upright grand piano in her parlour, Miss Jenifer had mellowed with age and acquired a character which is denied to youth and is more precious than youth.

"Where's Joe?" she asked when Lydia returned. "Wouldn't he come in?"

"He's a bit put out to-day, Miss Jenifer," said Lydia. "Someone's been treading on his corns, I'm afraid. But he sent you messages—he's so fond of you—you're the only person he cares for, I reckon. And he gived me this crab for you—and I'll dress it for supper."

"Did he, my dear? Did he say 'twas for me?"

"He did then. And he said he'd like for to take you out on the water again."

"And I'll go, Lyddy. And now you can run down to the village and get a nice saffron cake and a bottle of beer for Arthur to-night. And you can join us in a game of cards, if you've a mind to."

"Oh, thank you, Miss Jenifer!"

"I hope Joe treated 'e civil?" asked the old woman, looking slyly at her little maid.

"Very civil indeed, and he axed me to meet him to-morrow evening for a tell."

“ Did he ? Well, I never ! ”

“ But 'twon't be very cheerful, I'm fearing, from what he said, and because he's appointed the churchyard for the place of meeting.”

Lydia went into the kitchen, and Miss Varwell sat smiling to herself.

“ The young people,” she mused. “ What would life be without the young people ? They sweeten life for the old, sure enough. But I see troubles ahead of 'em, poor dears ! ”

THE following morning, Miss Jenifer Varwell elected to be wheeled down to the beach in her bath-chair, and sent Lydia to the foreshore to tell Mr. Major that she was coming to have a talk with him. He and she were lifelong friends and respected each other.

Lydia rapped on the Majors' door and cried out :

" I'm comè from Miss Varwell, please. She's wishful to take the air and will be wheeled down this minute, if you can see her, Mr. Major."

" And very welcome will she be ! " said Thomas. " Look out a bottle of cordial, Emma."

" Did you say cordial, Thomas ? " came a voice over Lyddy's shoulder. " It's a word that always makes me feel brighter—a beautiful and hopeful word."

" You here ! " cried Lydia, jumping round on Uncle Dick. " Miss Varwell's coming down to see Mr. Major and look at the sea."

" Then I'll stop to welcome her and sample this here cordial."

" I'll fetch her this instant moment," said Lydia, running off.

On the way to Miss Jenifer's cottage she met

Mary Varwell and Arthur, told them the news, and hurried on.

"Us'll go down to the beach, too," said Mary, "and look after your aunt. I'm wishful to see her for one or two reasons and I don't like for her to get talking too much to they Majors. Nice people I grant, but no kin to us."

"No kin yet, mother—but perhaps they will be some day."

"Don't you think to get Emma without a struggle. I know her sort!"

"She likes me. And I be going to offer for her soon."

"You'd best let me put in a word for you first, then."

"No, no. You leave her alone. Leave her to me, mother. Don't you interfere."

"All right—but you'll be sorry afterwards that you didn't put a little more faith in my powers—see if you aren't."

They reached the shore and found Richard lounging on the sand.

"Hullo, Mary!" he called out. "What a family party. And how be you, my old dear? What about the farm?"

"What about your trousers?" retorted Mary. "You're a shameful object, Richard."

"Tumble-down-Dick! A skeleton in your family cupboard, eh, Mary? Well, I don't rattle my bones at my late brother's farm very often, do I?"

"A cruel thing—a blot on the name. I've seen my poor husband weep tears over you—

yes, I have. And you, with your gifts, playing pianos in pubs and cadging for drinks all over the country!"

"I must have exercise and the open road," answered Dick. "And ain't the labourer worthy of his hire? If you can talk sense and play the piano, then nice people will always welcome you."

"Nice people!" sniffed Mary. "No nice person would have nothing to do with you, I should hope."

"Then be a nice person yourself and leave me alone. But you ought to be Martha—not Mary. You're a Martha-hearted woman and narrow as a knife. Your mind, Mary—not your body. Your body's generous and promising. But it gives the lie to your heart!"

Mary drew up her ample body and began:

"Honest work——"

But Richard interrupted her.

"You do a bit of honest play for a change, my dear soul. Kick up your heels, you ain't too old! Let yourself go and have a bit of fun, and don't be always saying unkind things about the rest of us. Arthur's a poor reed, but he does know how to play. And as for me, I'm afore my time, like most other heroes."

"Heroes don't drink," said Mary, "or if they do, they keep shut about it. Drink have ruined you, Richard."

"Yes," admitted he. "A thousand pities I'm such a thirsty man. All my wisdom won't

get me a new liver. There's a fine fortune for the doctor as'll promise new livers for old."

At this point the conversation was ended by the coming of Aunt Jenifer in her bath-chair, wheeled by Lydia. They crossed the bridge over the brook, and reached the shore outside the Majors' cottage. Miss Jenifer wore a bonnet with a curly black feather, a black cape, and a shawl.

"Here she comes," cried Dick, "looking for all the world like my late friend, Queen Victoria. Regular queen's weather you've got, Jenifer."

Everybody hastened to pull Miss Varwell's chair into a comfortable position looking out to sea, and Dick said :

"There you are—now you can sit and rule the waves like we pretend Britannia does!"

Mary began fussing round the old woman and said :

"A brave sight to see you out in the air. But keep your throat warm. Don't take off no wraps. Pull up they cushions, Lydia."

"You want for something to keep the sun out of your eyes, Aunt Jenny," said Arthur. "Shall I put up the hood?"

They fussed over her and congregated round her, until Miss Jenifer remarked rather fretfully :

"I've come to look at the sea this morning, not you people. Where's Tom Major?"

Lydia went to fetch him, and then Miss Jenifer turned to her brother and said :

"When be you going to get a new hat and a decent pair of boots, Richard?"

"When the scarecrow season comes round, my dear," answered he. "I know the happy hunting grounds." And he flapped his dilapidated feet on the sand.

"You shame the name, Richard," declared Mary, and Arthur laughed and said that Uncle Dick would make a tidy good scarecrow himself.

"He might do worse," Mary said.

"Where's Tom Major?" asked Miss Jenifer, who never liked her family fussing round her. And then Mr. Major appeared, carrying a tray with wine glasses and a bottle of Emma's home-brew.

"Good morning, my old dear," cried Thomas, "and glad to see you. Here's a nice drop of home-brewed wine for 'e after your journey."

"Thank you, Thomas," said Jenifer, accepting a glass. Everybody sipped the wine, but Uncle Richard, having taken a mouthful, spat it out again and cried:

"Holy Moses! What's this made of, Thomas? I thought I knew everything."

"Ah! It's a secret, Dick," Thomas said.

"Keep it then! I don't want it."

"Disgusting behaviour," murmured Mary.

"'Tis raspberries, I think."

"Or elderberries?" suggested Arthur.

"Or else blackberries?" put in Aunt Jenifer.

"Anyway, here's health and long life to you, Aunt Jenifer!" cried Arthur.

Everybody drank, and Richard muttered:

"A nice wine for a death-bed, I dare say; but not while anybody's got strength to fight against it."

"Ah, ha!" said Mr. Major. "You'll wish you'd got it when you're down below on the Dowl's gridiron, Dick."

"Where's my nephew Joe?" asked Aunt Jenifer.

"He'll be along in a minute, I expect," said Thomas. "Done some good work this morning."

"He gave me a brave crab yesterday, did Joe!"

"Did he?" cried Mary. "Glad to hear it. But 'twas because Thomas told him to do so, I expect."

"No, no, Mary—I said naught about it. 'Twas his own idea."

Mary grunted, and Jenifer went on, "Didn't nobody tell him I was coming?"

"I lay he knew," said Mrs. Varwell. "But what cares he for your wishes—young snake in the grass."

"You be down on him, Mary," said Jenifer. "What's he done to you, my dear?"

"Us all know what Joe is," sniffed Mary.

"He's a good bit under the weather along of the unemployed," said Thomas Major, and Mary remarked:

"He'll be unemployed himself—on the treadmill, afore long, the wicked way he's going."

"Well," said Jenifer, "you can all leave me

now, if you please. I've come to talk to Thomas."

"Plotters! Plotters!" cried Uncle Dick. "You watch out, Mary. I believe Jenifer's going to run away with Tom and leave us all guessing—yes I do. Good-bye, my old love. And don't you elope with this here fisherman. Come on, Mary, I'll pick a bit of dinner with you this morning."

"No you won't, Richard," exclaimed Mary, shaking her head. "Us ain't got no dinner for you to-day. And I don't want the men up at our place to see you in them rags, whether or no."

"What about my cos lettuce yesterday?" said Arthur, laughing.

Mary turned to Miss Jenifer and said:

"Don't you stay out too long and take a chill, Jenifer. There's always chills flying about on this beach. You've got a white circle round your mouth I don't like, and your eyes look a thought glassy to me. You wait about, Arthur, and wheel your aunt home when she's wishful to go. Good-bye, and God bless you till to-morrow, Jenifer."

And off went Mrs. Varwell waving her hand. Miss Jenifer sighed with relief. She did not love Mary.

"Come along, Arthur, to the Wheatsheaf," said Richard, "and stand me a drink to get the taste of this beastly stuff out of my mouth."

"I'll be back presently, Aunt Jenny," said Arthur, kissing her, and following Uncle Dick.

"Be they gone, Tom?" whispered Miss Jenifer in Mr. Major's ear.

"They've all gone now," said he, sitting beside her, and she replied:

"That clears the air. My family be a lot of worthless, poor creatures, Tom."

"I wouldn't go so far as that. They've got their points, Jenifer."

"Well, I don't want to think of them. The sea and you be better companions. Ain't the sea blue to-day?"

"So blue as your eyes, my dear."

"They've long since faded."

"Not a shade. Blue as fifty years ago. You was a peach, then, Jenifer."

"Naught left now but the 'stone."

"Well, well; we all get a bit ruinous with the years; but your good, brave heart's left. Is the sun in your eyes?"

"I like it. 'Tis a melancholy thought to us longshore people that there's no sea in heaven, Tom."

"For your ear alone, Jenifer," said Tom, "I always take that text with a grain of salt. I can't and won't believe us seafarers be going to lose our joy up there. If the New Jerusalem's like the Midlands, there's a lot will be cruel disappointed. I'll die hoping for a nice deep sea; but no wrecks—no wrecks up over and no battleships no more."

Jenifer nodded and said reflectively:

"I've always respected the sea since it drowned old Nathan Williams."

"Aye—such a terrible bad man was better under it than on it," Thomas agreed.

"When I be well and spry like I am now, I always think of the next world," said Jenifer, "but when I be sick I put it away. I often wish, when my time comes, that I could go back to God in better health."

"A curious thought sure enough."

"But that's His affair, no doubt. I should have liked for Him to see me in my twenties, Thomas."

"No doubt He did, my dear, with His universal eye—no doubt He let it fall upon you, and thought what a fine piece you was—a very grand sight, Jenifer—six feet tall a'most and straight as a mast."

"And now I be bent and old; but I've had a good life, Tom—a good life as lives go."

She handed him her glass, and said:

"Very nice cordial if it weren't for the taste of it. Tell Emma I drank it. I be going to give a birthday party this year, Tom—seventh of October it is. 'Tis my eightieth birthday, and your eightieth did ought to be celebrated a bit out of the common. I've been thinking about it a lot. You'll come, Tom, and Emma—and my relations—every one of 'em. I've been thinking about them too, Tom—because I be going to make my will. I'm just watching 'em."

"There's a lot to think upon with all your goods," said Thomas.

"Not so many, thank God—only six. Mary,

of course, my brother Arthur's widow. Well, you can't ask me to fall on her neck."

"A heavy pattern of woman, but high principled."

"How do you know? A very self-righteous and self-sufficient creature. And under her cloak of religion she's death on the main chance. She shortened my brother's life, in my opinion."

"No, no. He always took Mary in a very Christian spirit."

"Well, I don't find myself particklar Christian when I think of her. Then there's my brother Richard, poor dear wretch."

"He might have been such a successful man, too."

"' Might-have-beens ' ain't no good when you're making your will. If I left Richard the money he'd pour every farthing down his throat."

"He'd try. A puzzling fashion of man, yet wonderful wise—for others."

"Then there's my nephew, Arthur—very like his father, though he don't stand to work like his father did. Not like Mary, thank God! Always after the maidens, they tell me."

"Natural at his time of life. A pretty good fellow, and a pretty good farmer."

"Too frivolous—too frivolous; but kind to me—always kind and civil to me, I will say. Kisses me, Tom."

"And why not? He's very fond of you, Jenifer," said Tom.

"Fonder than that anarchist Joe be. He's

like a dog that hasn't been broke in proper—always snapping at his betters. I try to see a ray of hope there—but who could?"

"The best men are never the easiest to get on with. He means well."

"Does he know what he means?" asked Jenifer. "And lastly they twins—Minnie and Nelly Masters—little harmless women what keep a wool shop to Lydmouth. My cousins they be; and always very civil to me."

"I know 'em," said Tom. "Good creatures both."

"Good for what, however? They twitter like sparrows and Nelly echoes Minnie every time she speaks."

"Who else is there belonging to the family, Jenifer?"

"That's all, thank God. That's my relations. A poor lot, Tom—a terrible poor lot."

"In my experience relations mostly are," said Mr. Major.

"For two pins I'd leave you and Emma my money and my house."

But this announcement much perturbed Thomas, who cried:

"Not a penny—not a penny! Don't you dream of no such thing, Jenifer. I'm a warm man myself, and it would make a cruel lot of trouble and ill-feeling—a proper scandal in Yellow Sands. Us should have to leave the place. No, no, my old dear; blood's thicker than water when you come to your last will and testament; and so it should be."

"I don't like one of 'em half so well as I like you," declared Miss Varwell.

"You needn't like 'em," said Tom, "but you must love 'em. Providence sends our relations for our discipline. The rising generation's all right. Arthur and Joe be sound at heart. Joe's a rare good worker for all his wild opinions, and knows the ways of crabs and lobsters most amazing."

"I'll tell you something," said Jenifer, beckoning Tom to come nearer. "My little maid, Lyddy Blake—she's fallen in love with Joe."

"Then order her to think no more of him—Joe ain't for the girls. He's dead against marrying and giving in marriage, Joe is. He'd make the world over again if he could—and a beastly world it would be. But all fruits have got to be sour afore they're sweet. He'll ripen in his turn."

"Unless the frost of his opinions nips him off too soon. But Lyddy says he does good things unbeknown. And Mary says that Arthur will often help a lame dog over a stile."

"They're both right. If Arthur's fond of the girls, Jenifer, God made him so, and it's a wife's part to keep a man straight after marriage. If she can't, nobody can."

"I ain't got much sympathy with they wives that yowl about to everybody that their husbands be tired of them. Nor yet with they husbands who whine to other women that their own women be fools. No, I ain't

got much sympathy with their like, but it takes all sorts to make even a village like Yellow Sands."

"Hullo, here's Joe!" exclaimed Tom, as the young fisherman came along to collect some crab pots that lay beside a fishing boat. "Come and talk to your Aunt Jenifer, Joe."

Miss Varwell was probably the only person for whom Joe felt anything akin to respect, and he hid this feeling so deeply that nobody would have believed it. He was in a milder mood than usual, and strode up and shook the old woman's hand.

"Mornin', Aunt Jenifer," he said. "I hope you find yourself pretty clever this mornin'. When be you coming for a row on the sea with me again?"

"I'd like for you to take me, and you shall do; but I hear bad things against you, Joe. They say you're leading a lot of harmless young men to hell with your opinions."

Immediately Joe's brows thickened and his eyes grew darker.

"Not me!" he cried bitterly. "I'd lead 'em out of hell if I could."

"And all against marriage, too?"

"Yes—with a million men out of work. We don't want no more paupers."

"You'll grow into the living daps of your handsome father; but he was never a prig when he was young—knew his place, your father did."

"His place ain't my place—my place is

different, and I know it so well as he knew his."

"You listen to your Uncle Richard—his opinions——"

"Worthless old dog!" burst out Joe.

"Not worthless," said Miss Jenifer, "but his worth was lost. There's lots of sense in him for the likes of you. I've just been telling Mr. Major here that I be going to give a party next October on my eightieth birthday, and you'll have to come to it. And see you bring me a present, Joe—a proper birthday present for my eightieth birthday!"

But Joe shook his head and answered.

"If I had a present to give away I wouldn't give it to you."

"And why not?"

"Because you're a blasted capitalist!"

"Order, Joe," said Mr. Major.

"All capitalists is blasted," declared Joe. "Damn presents! Who's a right to luxuries when there's women and children want bread? The rich ought to be giving their life blood for 'em, if they was the Christians they pretend to be."

Jenifer listened quietly to this harangue, smiled and wagged her head, and said:

"I'm never too old to learn, Joe. A blasted capitalist—eh?"

"I don't say it's all your fault—but un-earned money——"

"Rot, Joe!" put in Mr. Major. "There ain't a penny in the world somebody haven't earned."

"Stealing ain't earning, Mr. Major!"

"Who's stealing, Joe?"

Joe was about to reply, when the voice of Richard Varwell came from behind them speaking to Arthur.

"Hullo! there's Thomas trying to cut out the family and Joe making the running while your back's turned, Arthur. Wants all your cash for the Reds—eh, Jenifer?"

"He knows what he wants," said Jenifer laughing. "He wants my life blood!"

"Not for myself—not for myself!" said Joe hastily.

"Well, I be ready to go home now," declared Miss Varwell. "Call Lyddy, Arthur; she's indoors with Emma. Good-bye, sea! Don't the grand sea make you happy, Joe?"

"The tears of the world would make a bigger sea than that. Listen to me, Aunt Jenifer—"

"You shut up, Joe," said Arthur. "She's tired. She don't want to hear you preach. I'll wheel you home, Aunt Jenny."

He took the chair handles, but Joe came up and cried:

"You drop her! I'll drive her. I want to tell her a bit more yet. I'll let her have a few more ugly truths on the way home."

"Joe'll call you names and preach your head off," warned Arthur.

"You clear out—I'll handle her."

"Yes—into the ditch. Don't you trust a Bolshie, Aunt Jenifer."

Miss Varwell looked at them calmly and said :
" Lyddy can wheel me while you two fight it out for me."

" Fight for you ? " said Arthur, and Thomas Major replied :

" Not the first time the young men have fought for your aunt. Fifty years ago a lot did—and all lost her."

Joe seized the handle of the chair and said roughly :

" She wants to list to me, so clear out, Arthur, or we'll run you down."

" We'll see," Arthur retorted. " She's dared me to fight for her, and I will."

" Don't be a fool !" said Joe. " I could lick you one-handed." He gave the chair a lurch, and Thomas cried out :

" Hi, watch out, Joe, or you'll have her over."

" Labour versus Capital !" called out Uncle Dick. " Don't you trust Labour, Jenifer."

But Arthur had grasped Joe by the shoulder and shouted :

" Now for it, Bolshie ! "

" I'll break your neck if you don't leave go," Joe shouted back.

The chair swayed : Lydia and Emma ran to the rescue, and Jenifer piped :

" Stop ! Stop, Joe ! "

He stopped suddenly and asked grimly,
" You want Arthur ? "

" Yes, I do want Arthur," she declared.
" We're both blasted capitalists, me and Arthur, and capitalists must cling together."

"Take her then," said Joe, "and go where all capitalists be going—the pair of you!"

"Triumph of Capital and law and order!" cried Uncle Dick.

The little group dispersed, and where their human voices had been heard only the waves and the gulls spoke on the shore of Yellow Sands.

THAT evening the bar of the Wheatsheaf began to fill at the usual hour, and one of the first comers was Uncle Dick, who had a favourite nook by the hearth sacred to him. Mr. Baslow, the lawyer, once calculated that he must have spent thousands of hours in that corner. Mr. James Bartlett, the landlord, was chaffing Richard on this very theme when they were interrupted by a loud, young voice outside crying :

"To hell with the Constitution!"

"Hullo! There's my nevvv, Joe," laughed Mr. Varwell. "Now we shall have to sit up."

Joe came in with Mr. Baslow, who said to the innkeeper :

"The Socialists want the public room for a shop steward from Plymouth one day next month, James ; and I say 'No.' What do you say?"

"You can't say 'No'," said Joe. "You silly old Conservatives will doom this place to rot and ruin. I want to bring a little sense and advancement into Yellow Sands, and if you won't listen to me, you shall listen to somebody who ain't a prophet in his own country. 'Tis well known all such be scorned."

"Nobody's scorning you, Joe," said Mr.

Bartlett, a pacific man—some called him an opportunist.

"When we built the public hall it was for a billiard room and for the young people to enjoy themselves in of an evening," went on Baslow. "It wasn't for paid agitators to spout sedition in, my boy."

"All lawyers did ought to be used for fish bait," muttered Joe rudely. "'Tis a free country yet, or supposed to be."

"Hear, hear!" cried Mr. Bartlett.

"The majority are still guarded against the anti-social minority in England, Joe," went on Mr. B.

"'Anti-social!' Us? We're the social ones—we're the ones that want to share and share alike."

"Easy to share if you've got nothing yourself, Joe!"

"If I was you," said Mr. Bartlett to Mr. Baslow, "I'd raise no objection to letting this here Plymouth man tell in the public room. The Socialists be like the steam whistle—smallest part of the engine and the noisiest—but necessary too, mark you. An engine's no good without a whistle, eh? Let 'em blow in the public hall, so long as they don't blow the roof off. They'll hurt nobody, and they may do a lot of good. Eh, Joe?"

"We don't want to hurt no honest man; we want to heal," said Joe. But Mr. Baslow replied:

"It won't heal us to chop our heads off, boy!"

"Capitalists like you be past healing," answered Joe. "You can only cure some things by killing 'em."

At this some of the younger men laughed, but Mr. Baslow, who had no sense of humour, was offended, and prepared to leave the bar. Ignoring Joe, he said to the inn-keeper :

"We'll consider about the meeting—can't be settled in a minute. I'll see vicar about it to-morrow." Then he said to Joe :

"A young man in a hurry, you are ; and you belong to a young party in a hurry. Don't fear, Joe. England will save you from yourself and your false prophets."

"That's right, Mr. B.," said Dick Varwell, who had been listening in amused silence. "Talk sense to the fool."

"Pearls before swine, Dick," Mr. Baslow replied, leaving the inn.

"Swine yourself, Mr. Busy Blood-sucker ! Busy old blundering bumble-bee ! " shouted Joe.

"Shut your mouth, Joe," said Thomas Major, coming in as Mr. Baslow went out. "Control yourself and hear all sides and call people what they're christened—and nothing else ! Bass, James, if you please."

"There's only one side," cried Joe, "and that's the side of a million men who want work and can't get it. No justice nowhere. Ban't the newspapers full of injustice, Uncle Dick ? "

"Never read 'em, Joe," said Mr. Varwell. "I only look at the pictures of the ladies what

are getting divorced by their poor husbands. Very pretty most times. The plain ones keep faithful, because it pays 'em best to do so. When I read the papers I catch myself wishing I was God A'mighty for half an hour, and that's no use, because I ain't and never shall be. There's no justice, as you say, Joe, because we don't give it a chance to show up."

"Hear, hear!" put in the innkeeper.

"If there's no equality, there can't be justice," said Joe.

"Equality ain't justice, you ass," answered Uncle Dick. "Equality's tomfoolery and contrary to nature. Do your Labour bosses want equality? Not much! Where would they be? When England was somebody, gentlemen led her—for pride and love of her." Here Richard rose and saluted the past of England with a comical gesture. "Now the lawyers and tradesmen lead her, for what they can get out of her."

"Hear, hear!" [said] Mr. Bartlett. "A true word, Dick Varwell—a true word."

"We want a few kindly lions and tigers to guide the flocks and herds."

"Whoever heard of a kindly tiger, you old fool!" cried Joe.

"A benevolent autocracy, my son!"

"Benevolent grandmother!"

"A grandmother, certainly, if she's benevolent," replied Richard.

"The rich must eat as well as the out-of-works, remember," said Thomas Major.

"Hear, hear!" said Mr. Bartlett. "Of course they must."

"And they eat us! Ours is a cannibal country."

"Capital don't eat Labour, my poor Joe," said Richard. "It's Labour eats Capital. We want fewer people and more machines, then we should all be happy."

"Happy!" sneered Joe. "It's only little children did ought to be happy: us don't want happiness, us wants justice."

"And if justice don't bring happiness 'tis worth little," said Dick.

"By God! You're a traitor, Uncle Dick," said Joe hotly. "A traitor to your own side! You'd make any man cry out for a bloody revolution."

"You give the revolution a'rest, Joe," said Thomas Major, "and pay a visit to your Aunt Jenifer. She ain't none too friendly since this morning and she don't like your opinions."

"I don't like her, and I ain't going to creep up her sleeve because there's money hid there. Leave that to Arthur. My money will go to the Reds!"

"Wait till it comes, Joe," said Uncle Dick. "Nothing breeds sound politics like a bit in the savings bank, and the only people that would leave money to the Reds are them that haven't got any."

"Hear, hear!" came from behind the bar "That's a very clever thought, Dick."

"Of course, you mustn't keep half-a-crown in your pocket, or a decent coat on your back, if it's contrary to your high opinions, Joe;

but I order you to be kind to your aunt, and to go and see her more often, for she'd like you if you gave her the chance."

"All masters are bullies and dock their men's liberty," muttered Joe.

"It's your bosses dock your liberty, not your masters," said Mr. Bartlett.

"Our bosses protect us."

"Against what?" said Dick Varwell.
"They protect you against your own freedom, against your will to work and your power to earn. They protect you against independence and self-respect and proper pride and ambition to excel."

"They protect the weakest members," said Joe doggedly, but Uncle Dick replied softly:

"Does it help the weak to cripple the strong? Never!"

Joe turned on him and said:

"How can the likes of you, as don't do an hour's work a day, stand for Capital and say these things?"

Mr. Bartlett laughed and said:

"Now, Dick! A fair answer. He's cotched you there, my boy!"

"Not he!" said Richard. "I'm a capitalist too, ain't I? My cash is in my head. Brains is the only sort of capital that's always safe, Joe, no matter what smashes, or how much you spend."

"They ain't got you far, anyway, Uncle Dick," said Joe.

Mr. Bartlett smiled and encouraged Richard

to best his nephew again in the argument, which he did by saying:

"It's for the likes of you, who can work, Joe, to keep my fine brains going. And that being so, stand me a thimbleful of port, like the generous chap you are. Giving's your strong point, eh? Give me a sip, my boy!"

"All right, I will," said Joe, and he flung down five shillings, left his own glass full and strode out of the bar.

Everybody was silent for a moment; then Mr. Bartlett said:

"Not a bad fellow if you dig deep enough."

"Well, let's drink his health," said Richard Varwell. "Split up the cartwheel and wish him good luck in a glass all round. I wouldn't say but what I rather like Master Joe sometimes."

"He don't want us to like him," said Mr. Bartlett. "If he thought we liked him he'd be offended."

"I wonder if he likes anybody?" asked a young man who had taken no part in the previous talk. "I shouldn't wonder——"

"He only likes the down-and-outs," said Mr. Major. "Joe likes nobody that ain't hungry."

"I'm not so sure," said the young man. "There's queer signs about him lately. I've heard him sigh awful heavy sometimes."

"Over the out-of-works," said Mr. Bartlett. "You'd think he felt himself to be responsible for them all."

"He do feel like that," put in Thomas. "If he wasn't such a simpleton you might call it rather fine of the chap."

"Oh, there's plenty of fine things in Joe," said Richard Varwell. "But they're like grains of gold in a dustbin."

"Perhaps somebody will sift 'em out afore long," thought the young man. "Anyhow it's better to have a grain of gold in you and the rest rubbish than to be all silver and no gold, like vicar now, or Mr. Baslow. Good they may be, but they ain't golden."

"Hear, hear!" Mr. Bartlett said, and the conversation turned to other things.

THE time for Joe's appointment with Lydia Blake in the churchyard had arrived, and under cover of dusk he set off for a spot among the tombs that was familiar to him. Beneath the tower on the northern side of the church, surrounded by yew trees, lay a flat grave raised a few feet from the ground. On it, scarcely visible, now that time had eaten the letters and lichens had bitten into them, was the name "Joseph Bartlett," an' ancestor of the innkeeper, who died in 1756, at the age of one hundred and one. The aged bones of this aged man must long have turned to dust, but his tombstone had often made a comfortable seat for young Joe, who came here to think out his problems, dream dreams and sigh for the living—a tormented spirit groaning above the peaceful dead.

That which troubled him now, however, was not the vast unhappiness of man, but the small unhappiness of his own heart, by no means small to him at that time. A strange thing had happened to him, and he had come to end it.

Bats flew round the tower, and a white owl suddenly sailed out of a barn across the valley, swooped over the stream, and passed on noiseless

wings to the woods behind Yellow Sands. Like an angel, or a ghost, it appeared, glided on and vanished.

A moment later the little figure of Lydia stole round the side of the church and hesitated timidly before Joe.

"Did you see the owl, Joe?" she said. "I love the white owls."

"They're cruel birds," said Joe, "they rob other bird's nests—like the rich."

"If they didn't they'd starve themselves, Joe, and their little ones would have naught to eat. 'Tis just nature—it don't seem cruel to me."

"You're right, there's nothing cruel in nature, except man—man's the only cruel animal."

He sighed.

"You're not cruel anyway," said Lydia softly, taking a step nearer; he edged away.

"I reckon you aren't either," said he. "Yet, I dare say you are really," he added in a different tone.

"When you love you don't want to be cruel anyhow—you feel kindly to everybody."

"Oh, do you? Not if the love doesn't go right, you don't—I've got no use for love."

"Haven't you, Joe?"

"The world's full of fools, Lydia, fools and hateful people—I've just left a pack of 'em at the Wheatsheaf—a lot of silly zanies—and the worst of them all is that lawyer Baslow. You'd think the world had been made for him alone to hear the conceited way he talks. I'm

beginning to hate everybody in this beastly place."

"You did ought to love everybody, Joe, with your opinions. You want everybody to be happy, yet you make everybody miserable."

"I haven't made you miserable, have I?" said Joe tenderly. "Tell me I ain't done that, Lyddy?"

"Oh no, no—you've made me happy, because I love your generosity."

"I ain't generous. I haven't nothing to be generous with. But, by God, if I had something, I'd give it all away. I'd—but I've got something special to say to you, Lydia Blake, and you'd better listen, and then you can go home, and I'll go home also."

"What's the trouble, Joe? What do you want to say to me?"

"Sit there, and listen, and don't interrupt."

Lydia seated herself on another tombstone, containing the relics of one of the children of the centenarian, who died at ninety-eight. A few feet of grass separated her little feet from Joe's great ones, and there they sat opposite each other, their faces glimmering pale in the twilight.

"A darned queer thing have overtaken me—me of all people," said Joe. "I couldn't believe it at first, but it's true."

"I hope it's a good thing," said Lydia.

"No—it's a damnable thing—a judgment, I reckon, for being down on other chaps."

"You're down on such a lot of chaps, Joe,

yet I believe you wish 'em all well in your heart. You wouldn't hurt a fly."

"I'd hurt a rich man—but don't interrupt, Lydia. Keep your mouth shut. A bad, mad thing have happened to me, I tell you, and I won't stand for it. You know my opinions, or if you don't, everybody else do. I say folk be cracked to go marrying in these days. It's murder and suicide both to marry, while the capitalists have got us on their chains. But what do I find? What do I find, Lydia Blake? I find—in strict confidence, please—that I've got a girl in my fool's head; and there she bides and won't be cast out. Me of all people to be hit like this!"

"Lor', Joe! What a punishment for crying out against marriage!"

"Yes; that's how things happen in this hateful world; and you—you are the aggravating creature that have done it."

He rose, pointed at her and stood over her; she stared at him speechless; her lips trembling and her heels digging little holes in the grass.

"Not that I blame you," he went on. "You didn't try, or nothing like that, of course. But I won't have it—I won't be made to look a fool in the eyes of the people—not for love, or any other damned nonsense. I'm ashamed to say it, but there 'tis; I be got to love you, Lydia Blake!"

She stared at him and her eyes filled with tears.

"Yes, you stare," he said, "but it's true,

and it must be true. You know love, same as you know whooping cough, because there's nothing else like it."

"I'm sorry, Joe, if you are," murmured poor Lydia, looking down to let the tears drop unnoticed into her lap.

"'If I am'? Of course I am. I weren't born to go love-hunting. I'm after something a good few sizes larger than love; and that's justice for the under-dogs. And, meantime, this silly mess have got into my mind."

"Be you sure it's love, Joe? Perhaps it's something else."

"It's love, and I'll tell you how I know. I asked myself what I'd do, if I heard somebody else was going to marry you, and until I reasoned with myself, I felt I'd hate for any other man to take you—and that's love—just damned, silly love, and nothing else."

"I suppose it is."

"A proper horror for a chap like me; and I'm telling you, Lydia Blake, because you must help me, so as I can stick to my principles and not lose my self-respect. Lord knows what there is about you——"

He leaned over her and she looked up at him with a wistful gaze. He drew back instantly, and went on:

"And I wouldn't marry, even if you'd take me. I wouldn't marry if I could—far from it."

"I quite see, Joe."

"So if you can honestly say you don't feel anything similar; or better still, you fancy

some other man, then I reckon the beastly feeling would fade away. That's why I mention this subject, and it's up to you to help me, out of friendship, if you can."

Lydia was silent for a moment, then she turned to him and said:

"Most of the Labour members be married men with families, I believe, Joe. You see 'em fondling their little children in the illustrated papers, like the upper people."

"More shame to 'em!" declared Joe. "We don't pay 'em to have children, nor yet to fondle 'em; we pay 'em to smash the capitalists. Instead of which they turn into capitalists themselves—to a man they do; and I won't trust one of 'em much longer. Meantime I won't marry you; and if you'll take the matter in hand and let me hear you're not in the market, then I'd feel a weight off my mind. There's only the Cause for me; and—and—in any case, I well know I'm not fine enough for a rare piece like you, Lyddy, and I'd much like to see the man who is."

He leaned forward suddenly and touched her hand, saying tenderly:

"'Tis a scandal you should be working your fingers to the bone for a rich old guinea-pig like Aunt Jenifer!" Then he flung her hand away from him and said:

"But there 'tis—I won't have my schemes upset by you; and I've made that clear—and so enough said."

She remained silent, and he asked;

"You understand me?"

"Oh, yes—and I do love a man for that matter," answered Lydia, smiling.

"The hell you do!" cried Joe blankly, starting up. "Well, that's fine. That cuts the knot very clever indeed."

He looked glum and scraped his nails on the tombstone. "I'm—I'm glad to hear it, Lyddy. That lets me out all right. Do 'e love you properly?"

"He's told me he do," said Lydia.

"Has he, by God! Well, they're a rare nest of liars in Yellow Sands and I wouldn't trust him too far if I was you. I bet my boots the fool don't love you—not like what I could have loved you, if my opinions had been different. But now I'm free—that's all that matters to me. And if I knew who the man was—do I know him?"

"Not very well, I reckon, Joe," said Lydia.

"So much the better. But not Arthur? Not my cousin, Arthur Varwell? I won't have you take that philandering idiot. You shan't do it, Lyddy."

"Good powers, Arthur wouldn't look at me," laughed she.

"I should hope not. If he do, I'll make him sorry he was born. Whatever you are, you're too good for the likes of him. And I hope the beggar will serve you proper, whoever he is—or I won't forgive him."

"To know all is to forgive all, Miss Varwell says."

"Not a chance! If you knew all about 'em, you'd never forgive anybody. Good-bye and good luck," said Joe, turning to go. "And not a word, mind."

"Not a word, Joe."

He looked at her, sighed, and tore himself away. She began to sob, then her eyes twinkled and she smiled; then she buried her face in her arms and laughed and cried alternately.

The white owl flew back over the church tower, a fat mouse in its beak, with which to satisfy the owlets in their nest. But Lydia did not see it passing.

Presently she ran home and slipped up to bed.

BANK holiday arrived, and Emma Major fulfilled her promise to spend it with Arthur Varwell at Lydmouth.

They set out early in the morning with a basket of provisions, to walk there, though it was more than six miles away, but to these strong young creatures six miles was a stride; they had walked twenty at a stretch before now.

Emma had made herself a new green dress and wore a string of blue glass beads. Arthur had donned a purple tie and socks to match, so that there was a good deal of colour about them. The hedges were crowned with blue-bells and the orchards were still foaming with blossom. The young leaves of the oak were like amber, and the beech and elm leaves were pale yellow and green. The mingling shades were full of brightness and sunshine, but there were clouds in the mind of Emma, who had not forgotten Joe's words about polygamists. She would not take Arthur's arm when he offered it at a stile; she was cautious. But as time went on his happy humour became irresistible to the girl, and she laughed aloud at his jokes, teased him and began to enjoy herself. The more she responded the more he shone before her; yet always at the back of her mind were

those words of Joe Varwell's, warning her against this youth.

Presently they stood on a cliff above Lydmouth looking down at the little town. It was built in a cup between two lofty hills, like Yellow Sands on a greater scale. Cliffs of red sandstone shielded it to the west and east, and it ran back up the combe for a mile alongside a small river. There was half a mile of sea front, but no pier. Compared to most of the southcoast towns Lydmouth remained unspoiled.

"I often think I'd like to live in a town," sighed Emma, gazing down on the spectacle of shops and houses in rows. "Then again, I don't think I should."

"I'm glad you don't always want to, Emma," said Arthur. "You wouldn't suit a town, in my opinion. And a town wouldn't suit you."

"Why wouldn't I suit a town? Ain't I grand enough for a town?"

"Too grand—too grand by far. 'Tis only small folk can stand town life, Em; you'd be stifled there. You need the hills and the open valleys, the sea shore and the sea waves around you. Bricks and mortar would be the death of you."

"I wouldn't say so at all. I sigh for 'em sometimes. I'm a girl what likes company, Arthur, and plenty of it."

"I'm with you there," exclaimed Arthur. "I like company myself—the more the merrier."

"Ah! You mean girls, I suppose?" said Emma smiling slyly.

"Girls? And if I do? But one girl's good enough for me, Em."

"Is she then? One at a time you mean?"

"One all the time, if I could win her."

"Come along and let's go down to the front," said Emma, starting on before him. "We'll eat our lunch on the beach and then go about in the town. It's a pity the shops are shut."

"That it is. I'd have liked to buy you a present, Em, if you'd be so terrible kind as to accept one."

"Not much use if the shops are shut, however," said Emma.

"They'll not be shut next market day, though; and if I can give mother the slip for five minutes, I'll promise to bring you something. I've got an idea what it shall be, too."

They scrambled down the hillside and reached the straight little parade of Lydmouth. The sea was ruffled by the west wind, but the sun shone, and the two found a sheltered spot on the beach where they took their lunch.

"There seems to be something on your mind, Emma," said Arthur. "What is it? Ain't you happy?"

"There is something on my mind," answered Emma, thinking of polygamists. "But 'tis a secret thought, and I can't share it with you."

"Is it a—is it a man?" asked Arthur, turning green.

"It is, and it isn't, you may say."

"Lord, Emma—you don't mean—you could come here with me, and seem so jolly and all, and be thinking of somebody else?"

"Oh, don't be silly, Arthur, you don't understand. And I'm not going to explain."

This did not seem to be a wise moment for the proposal that Arthur had planned. He grew despondent, and threw a packet of sandwiches to the sea-gulls.

"Heavens, Arthur, don't chuck away the victuals like that. I'm hungry," Emma said.

"I'm chucking away my share, not yours."

"Ain't you hungry too, then? You did ought to be after that walk."

"I'm a good bit worried," Arthur sighed.

"Don't spoil the fun, Arthur. Cheer up. I'm not thinking of anybody but—myself, see?"

She blew out a paper bag and popped it under his nose. He burst out laughing and they cheered up.

They were rising to go when a queer apparition appeared on the front. Two little women, both five feet high, and both apparently identical, were coming along arm in arm in the direction of Arthur and Emma. They wore tight, plum-coloured gowns, and round hats perched on top of their yellow hair buns. Like their clothes, their features and figures were similar, and they twittered to each other like birds as they walked along. Button boots of cloth encased their feet and ankles, and kid gloves covered their hands, leaving an inch of flesh visible between the cuff and the wrist-band of the glove.

Arthur saw them and cried :

"Lord! if there ain't our cousins, Miss Minnie and Miss Nellie Masters, of the Berlin

wool shop. Shall us hide, or shall us hail 'em ? "

" Too late to hide ; they're on us," whispered Emma. " They've spotted 'e."

" Why," cried Minnie, who always took the lead, " if there ain't Cousin Mary's Arthur ! "

" Cousin Mary's Arthur," echoed Nellie " Why, for sure ! "

The two little creatures trotted up to Arthur and shook his hand, piping in high pitched voices like sparrows. Emma was introduced and greeted, and then Miss Minnie Masters exclaimed :

" What a coincidence now ! Us was only talking about the family this morning and saying that us must run over to Yellow Sands and see Cousin Jenifer ; her so old and all. You can't see too much of the aged," I said.

" And I agreed with her," Nelly added. " You can't see too much of the aged," I said.

" Miss Varwell's going strong," said Emma. " 'Twill be her eightieth birthday this autumn, and she's going to give a grand party."

" We've had our invite already, and we've planned our presents, Nelly and me. But you must come and drink a cup of tea with us, my dears. Yes, you must. What ! Shall our nephew come to Lydmouth and go again without drinking a cup of tea along with Nelly and me ? Never ! "

" Never ! " said Nelly, patting him on the arm. " Us was just taking the air, but we're on our way home, and you shall come along with us."

So, much against their will, the unlucky

pair were forced to sacrifice their sweet and interesting solitude to the hospitality of two old maids.

The twins, for such of course they were, kept a wool shop in the main street of the little town. Here, in a low, thatched house with a flat shop window filled with patterns of wool, they lived between a grocer and a bank—'a very safe position,' as Minnie had once declared. Their great ambition in life was to have a bow window for their wares, like the tailor opposite and the hat shop lower down the street, but so far they had not been able to save enough money to build such a noble addition to the property.

Yet the little regret did not spoil their lives. They had the great blessing of each other and, as long as they were spared to live together, life gave them almost all that they desired. They prayed every night that they might die at the same moment, that not even in heaven should they be separated by even so much as an hour. As a result of this, when one was ill, the other fell ill also, and they recovered at the same time.

At forty-five years old, their present age, their own mother could hardly have told them apart ; and when they were children she always tied their hair with a different coloured ribbon—Minnie in blue, Nelly in pink—to be sure which was which. But in their babyhood they may have got mixed up a score of times, and so nobody could be sure if Minnie was really Minnie, or Nelly was Nelly.

Now they brought Arthur and Emma into their back parlour behind the shop, which was closed to-day, and spread a gorgeous tea. Home-made scones, cream, raspberry jam, tough cakes, dough cake, plum cake—all was there.

The meal lasted a long time, and after it began, the twins sprang their great piece of news on the young folk.

"Whatever do you think?" Minnie said, "a new greengrocer have come next door! Old Mr. Bolt retired, you must know, and sold the business, and Mr. William Travers be the man who bought it. He moved in two days ago, and us haven't seen him yet. But us hear that he's a nice man of fifty-odd, and a maiden aunt keeps house for him—his father's sister by all accounts, and but ten years older than he—Miss Tabitha Travers by name."

"By name," echoed Nelly. "And the question as be fidgeting us is this——"

"This," continued Minnie. "Did us, or did us not, ought to call on him, him being wifeless and a bachelor man?"

"And him being a stranger in a strange land—comes from Plymouth they say—and then residing next door, and joined on to our wall and all and all—did us ought to call?"

"A bachelor he may be," said Minnie, "but Christianity don't take no account of an accident like that, and 'tis our duty to suppose he's worthy for us to neighbour with."

"To neighbour with," Nelly said.

"So what would you do if you was in our

place, Miss Major ? ” asked Minnie, turning to Emma. “ Would you call, or not call, my dear ? ”

“ I’d call,” said Emma, promptly. “ Why not ? Of course you did ought to call, in my opinion.”

“ I’d have a look at ’em first,” said Arthur. “ It might be safer. Look over the garden wall next washing day.”

“ We’ve been in a flutter about it ever since we heard he was coming,” admitted Nelly. “ Haven’t we, Minnie ? ”

“ You have for sure, Nelly. With me ’tis only a question of propriety.”

“ Well, I say call,” said Emma. “ No harm done in calling, and if you don’t like the man——”

“ Or the spinster aunt——” put in Arthur.

“ You can gently drop ’em—and just nod when you happen to meet.”

“ Well, I’m glad you came,” said Minnie ; “ you’ve decided the awful question for us, and us’ll abide by your advice. My ! I doubt my Sunday clothes will be good enough—them coming from a great place like Plymouth with shops that’d swallow up ours and nobody’d know it was there.”

“ I ain’t afraid of his aunt, if you’re thinking of her,” said Nelly. “ She’s sixty-odd, and that’s a good few generations older than we.”

“ You call then,” said Arthur, “ and good luck to you, and may he be worthy of you.”

“ Us’ll put in a word for you if he seems

friendly," said Minnie, "and tell him you and your mother grows the finest lettuces in the county, not to mention cabbages and broad beans."

"Oh, I don't set up as a market gardener," laughed Arthur, "beasts are more in my line."

"Too lazy to dig," whispered Emma teasingly. "Ain't you, Arthur?"

When the twins exhausted the subject of Mr. Travers, the young people rose to leave, and as soon as they were out of earshot, Nelly said to Minnie:

"Is it a case, should you think?"

"Plain to the eye, a case," answered Minnie. "And a fine pair they be, Nelly. Us'll work something for their wedding—one of they antimacassars you do so clever, and a set of scarlet mats for the flower pots. All Varwells be fond of scarlet."

"That's why he's chosen her, mark me! 'Twas her hair!"

The twins giggled a good deal over this, and then resumed the subject of Mr. Travers.

"You don't think it a bit bold you and me calling on a bachelor?" asked Nelly.

"They advised it," said Minnie. "'Twas taken out of our hands, so to speak."

"When shall us go, my dear?" cried Nelly, rather excited.

"Sunday afternoon—that's the proper time for calling," declared Minnie. "Sunday afternoon's the appointed time."

"I love a call—I do love a call, Minnie."

"I know you do. And us can only hope 'twill be a successful one."

Meanwhile Arthur and Emma walked home, not in such high spirits as they set out, but satisfied with the day. Yet the proposal had not been uttered, and Arthur knew that he would have to choose another time for it. He felt, however, that he had made some progress with Emma, and trusted to the future, and the presents he meant to buy, to do the rest.

He left her at her father's cottage, and said :

"Had a good day, Em?"

"Yes, thank you, Arthur."

"Same here—what about a walk next Sunday?"

"I'll see—but you've had enough of me to last till next bank holiday, I should think."

"Then you think wrong—nobody could ever have enough of you, Emma."

"Oh, nonsense!" cried Emma, shutting the door on him.

She felt disturbed, but happy; then her face fell as she thought, "Joe's right all the same—Arthur's a polygamist at heart. I won't marry him. A pity he's that sort. *Is* he? Yes, for certain, if Joe said so. Joe's clever and knows men. I couldn't marry Joe either though—I'd rather have Arthur than him—polygamist or no. Funny the way men strike a girl. I daresay I won't marry at all. But that'd be silly, too. Oh dear—life's all problems somehow. 'Tis Joe's fault."

ON the following Sunday afternoon Minnie and Nelly Masters arrayed themselves in their Sunday gowns of green poplin, tight in the bodice, and their funny round hats trimmed with cocks' tail feathers rising out of black roses. Then they set out for the greengrocer's next door, about three steps away.

"I'm all of a dither," whispered Nelly, as they pealed the bell. "My knees be knocking."

"Bear up and control yourself," said Minnie, giving her a little poke; "he won't eat you."

The door was opened by Miss Tabitha Travers, a tall, stout woman, whose figure was so stiffly encased in steel ribbed corsets that it stood out all round her in hard lines. She wore black sateen, the collar pinned with a large jet brooch in the centre of which gleamed a pearl.

This woman, forbidding of countenance, but dignified, loved her nephew with all the love it was in her to bestow; but she was unfortunately tactless, without worldly wisdom, and, to put it mildly, of a difficult disposition, in which some jealousy was mingled.

At the moment when the twins arrived, Mr. Travers was dozing over *The People* in the parlour, with his pipe out and his waistcoat

unbuttoned. Yet Miss Travers, who knew this very well, was imprudent enough to lead the callers in on top of him, announcing in the doorway :

"Miss Minnie and Miss Nelly Masters to see you, Willie, from the wool shop next door."

This was one of the indiscreet things she did, unintentionally, of course. Mr. Travers, startled out of slumber, rose up, turned his back to button himself up, bowed over his shoulder and then came forward and shook them by the hand, saying he was pleased to meet them, though he was far from pleased at that time. He was a big man, with a round, red, clean-shaven face, inclined to be shiny, scanty of hair, and a fine set of teeth—a person of hearty appearance and jovial manners.

"We be come as Christians and next door neighbours," began Minnie, and Nelly repeated, "as Christians and next door neighbours."

"And right glad I am to see you and so's my Aunt Tabitha," said Mr. Travers, still setting his garments to rights, for they had been a good bit disordered since dinner.

"I've often marked you popping in and out of your back door, and felt pleased to think we'd got such a personable pair so close."

The twins twittered and felt glad they had come. Mr. Travers was very open in his language and was given to saying rather more than he meant when it was a question of paying compliments to women, old or young. Minnie replied :

"And us have felt a good bit heartened to think of such a powerful and capable male next door, Mr. Travers, because Mr. Bolt wasn't neither."

They chattered away and Mr. Travers liked them. Not only did they amuse him, they fascinated him because they were so alike. But what Miss Travers thought about them remained a mystery. At any rate she asked them to stay to tea, and Minnie said :

"And so we will then, if we ain't putting too much on you, ma'am."

"You ain't, thank you," she replied, though not very cordially. She thought secretly that they should have refused the invitation—a first call ought not to be such a long affair, she thought ; and her face grew more austere than ever as she went out to put on the kettle.

From the kitchen she heard sounds of giggling and guffawing in the parlour—her nephew was becoming facetious, and the twins loved a facetious man. These noises had a regrettable effect on Tabitha. She made the tea very weak, and cut the bread very thick, and spread the butter very thin, and forgot the jam.

When she came back with the tray, she slammed it down with a grunt ; she caught Nelly pushing her nephew in the arm and screeching out :

"What a man you are, to be sure ! "

For Mr. Travers was shining in his talk as well as in his face ; and twitting the sisters on their good looks.

But Tabitha soon showed the three of them that she was not in a mood for fun of this sort. And she cast down the twins a good deal and forgot to offer them sugar in their tea, which was the colour of straw, and tasted like straw also.

"What's happened to the tea, my dear?" asked Mr. Travers meekly. "It's a thought weak, eh?"

But his aunt made no reply and Minnie said: "It's delicious—just as we like it."

"We like it," echoed Nelly, who did not like it at all and hardly knew how to swallow it, being a lover of sugar.

The twins were a sensitive pair, and their spirits went down with a rush when they saw that Miss Travers was upset. She was always a silent woman, but they did not know this, and thought her taciturnity meant that they had created a bad impression and she disliked them. They wilted; they both refused a second cup of tea, and ate next to nothing.

Mr. Travers tried to brace them up again, for he was used to his aunt and knew her queer moods, and thought little of them, but he felt rather annoyed with her this afternoon.

As soon as they decently could, Minnie and Nelly rose simultaneously to depart, and Miss Travers positively sighed aloud with relief and deigned to smile upon them.

"We'll be going now," said Minnie, and Nelly repeated in a whisper, "be going now."

"And thank you for a very happy afternoon."

" 'ternoon."

" Come again," cried Willie Travers. " You've done me a power of good, you two."

" Us'll be very pleased if Miss Travers will drop in and drink a cup of tea with us one day," murmured Minnie, " and you, too, of course, Mr. Travers."

" Delighted," he said, " and just wait a minute, will you ? "

He disappeared and returned with a glorious pineapple from the shop window.

" Oh my ! " exclaimed Nelly, as he laid it in her arms.

" Oh my ! a pineapple and all ! "

" My, what a treat ! " cried Minnie. " Thank you, I'm sure. But you didn't ought to——"

" Didn't ought to, be damned ! " roared Mr. Travers. " You shall have another next Sunday."

Miss Travers scowled and suddenly turned her back and walked out of the room.

" Never mind her ! " said Willie in their ears. " 'Tis *my* pineapple, you understand."

He saw them out of the doorway, and waved to them as they vanished into their own house. Then he returned to Miss Travers, who was clearing away the tea things with a great clatter.

" A nicer pair I never met," he said blandly, " though hell knows which is which, for never on earth did I see, outside a case of Jaffa oranges, a pair of creatures so alike."

" You watch out, Willie. They're setting

their caps at you, and they be got to the desperate age when hope flickers up before any middle-aged man."

But Willie Travers laughed, for he well knew that his aunt had an idea that every woman hankered after him. Yet he had been jilted twice before he was thirty years old ; and, if it had not been for these accidents, would have married long ago. He liked women, and felt happy in their society ; but his two reverses had cooled him, and his aunt, who loathed the idea of a wife for him, stood like a wall of steel between him and the other sex.

IN spite of Mr. Baslow's opposition to the scheme of inviting a shop steward to lecture in the public hall at Yellow Sands, he was over-ridden and the man came.

One evening in the middle of August, Mr. Daniel Carter from Plymouth arrived to speak to the more advanced of the peaceful combe's inhabitants, and Joe was at the head of the deputation which received him. Mr. Carter was a dark young man of twenty-nine, with nothing particularly striking or revolutionary in his appearance. Joe would have made three of him, for he was under the middle height and looked delicate. Emma, who went to the meeting, thought he was "a poor wisp of a man"; and Mrs. Varwell, who did not go, but chanced to pass the man in the road, thought: "Him! To stir up a revolution! Arthur could lift him out of the way with his finger and thumb."

But what Mr. Carter lacked in physical powers he seemed to make up in moral indignation, of which he betrayed a considerable endowment; yet even this was of a mild quality.

The meeting took place at six o'clock in the billiards room. Nearly all the young men, of

whatever opinions, were there, several of the girls also, and not a few middle-aged and old persons, including Uncle Dick. Mr. Baslow and Mr. Major did not go. Joe was the chairman and very fine he looked, thought Lydia Blake. She was sitting beside Emma at the side of the hall, and she never took her eyes off him. To her his opinions did not greatly matter, but the zeal and fervour of heart from which they sprang mattered much and increased her love.

Mr. Daniel Carter, openly professing himself to be a Communist, began his address peaceably enough.

"As the Communists," he began, "aim at setting up Socialism by direct action, or revolution, and not by constitutional methods, many people have wondered why they should seek to enter Parliament, or try to get elected to municipal bodies."

"That's right! Tell us why," shouted somebody from the audience; and Joe roared out:

"Order! Silence there! No questions till afterwards."

"The Communist party, friends," continued Mr. Carter, clearing his throat, "is not anti-Parliamentarian. We believe that Parliament should be a great working-class platform for agitation and propaganda. But we do not believe that Socialism can ever be achieved by Parliament, or that the working class can ever rule through Parliamentary means. Our

candidates stand for Parliament in order to get a chance to expose this. Our sort of government, friends——”

“Here! Not so much friends, Mister!” cried another voice from the back. “We ain’t all friends o’ yourn, don’t you think it.”

“Shut up there!” shouted Joe, half rising in his chair. “No interruptions till after, I said. Let the man have his say. ’Tis only fair. Then you can talk.”

A loud laugh answered him. Joe cried out: “Chuck him out, somebody!”

The laugh subsided, and Mr. Carter resumed: “Our sort of government, comrades, is a working government based on dictatorship of the workers, ruling through their workers’ councils directly elected in factories and workshops.”

“Aye! Go to Russia!” interrupted the same voice. Joe was about to rise in his fury once more, but a gesture from Mr. Carter checked him.

“Let ’em talk—I like it,” he said. “Shows they’re alive anyway, and interested.”

Joe scowled, and subsided with a disgusted shrug, thinking that the shop steward was a fool.

“You’d like to model the Government on Moscow,” continued the voice, “which gets its power by brute force and violence and chops off the heads of the people who oppose it!”

Mr. Carter smiled and answered this attack

in a reasonable manner; and in the same temperate fashion proceeded with his speech, ended it, and took part in the discussion that followed. He never showed heat. "A damn poor thing in Communists," thought Joe, who felt bitterly disappointed in the meeting, and not only disappointed, but mortified. The questions became a joke—people grew facetious and coarse. Nobody seemed to take the matter seriously. Laughter was heard on all sides. Uncle Dick rose and made everybody shout with merriment. But there was a grain of wisdom in what he said:

"Who be these wicked rich men?" he asked. "I've never met one, my dears. Now I've got some statistics in my pocket—for a Conservative never comes to a Socialist meeting without arming himself. Now listen to this!"

He drew out a paper and read:

"The tables dealing with the distribution of incomes show that in Great Britain and Northern Ireland, there are altogether nearly 90,000 persons with an income over £2,000 a year, and 138 with incomes over £100,000 . . . To those facile Socialist orators—you, Mr. Carter—who hold that if these robbers of the poor were mulcted of their possessions—that means deprived, *comrades*—there would be wealth enough for everybody, the authors reply, that the rich are like the Alps, which tower in their magnificence above the plains; and if they were razed and the material which

constitutes them spread evenly over the surface of the land, there would be a rise of but a few inches in the general level! There, *comrades*! And if the forty-odd millions of this country can't allow a fleabite of the population like ninety thousand to have as much as £2,000 a year, shame to 'em for a lot of greedy growers! And if any of you was one of they ninety thousand, I'll bet you'd stick to your incomes, friends, and not be so keen for equality. And quite right, too!"

He made a few more jokes at Mr. Carter's expense, and Joe's, and then sat down amid general laughter and applause.

Mr. Carter smiled more mildly than ever and took the jests in good part, but with a touch of the superiority which clings to shop stewards in the presence of yokels.

At last Joe banged on the table and put an end to "the indecent revel," as he thought it; and the meeting broke up.

One person in the audience went out with a sore heart. Lydia Blake sympathized with Joe, and reflected:

"He was the only one who took it all seriously, and now he's feeling hurt because everybody didn't rise up and cheer the opinions of the lecturer; and he's feeling sick with the lecturer, too, for being so tame and poor-spirited. I wish I could go and talk to him. Perhaps I will——"

She hovered about for some time, hoping to see Joe by himself, but he was surrounded

by a crowd of young fishermen who were chaffing Mr. Carter. The group wound up the combe to a place where a motor car waited to carry Mr. Carter back to Plymouth. It was not till late the same evening that Lydia found an opportunity of speaking to Joe. She had gone down to see the Majors and observed Joe by himself on the beach, staring out to sea. With her heart thumping she ventured to run up to him and whisper :

" Well done, Joe. I was there—and a lot of them round me was mighty impressed—— "

" Was they ? " said Joe snappily, glowering at her. " 'Twas all a failure, and if you don't know it, I do."

Then he turned his back on her, but she seized his arm and cried :

" 'Twasn't a failure, Joe. You could never fail, dear Joe."

He shook her off and walked away. Filled with compassion and sorrow she went back to Miss Jenifer's cottage, and cried herself to sleep ; and Joe tramped up and down the sands for the greater part of the night. His temper gradually cooled ; he felt sorry that he had hurt Lydia, and decided to apologize in the morning. But his spirit was wounded, and he was disappointed and solitary, and, above all, humiliated.

IN August the harvesting began in Yellow Sands, and Arthur was kept busy. The weather was mainly fine and he was out all day in his cornfields. The grain rustled under the knives and was tossed aside in neat bundles as he rattled along on the reaping machine. He saw little of Emma in these days, but thought of her much, and decided to make his proposal as soon as the sheaves were in the barns ready for threshing. Sometimes she leaned over a gate watching him at work, or peeped through a hedge; and never had she admired him more than at this season when his face and arms glowed with sunburn, and he stuck to work. Then she felt she would marry him and they would be happy together. But Joe's warning still echoed in her thoughts, and she would change her mind. Another man was courting her, a widowed fisherman of forty-five, who lived near her father; but Arthur had not yet become aware of this. The widower was a serious person, of no polygamic tendencies, as different from Arthur as one man can be from another. But Emma liked him. Did she like Arthur more? Arthur inspired quite another emotion in her, something more ardent and more dangerous. Emma's head was stronger

than her heart, however, and generally had the last word of advice. But it did not mention whether she should marry the other man or not.

September came, and Arthur's barns were full. Even Mary was satisfied with the harvest that year—an early one and rich. She saw money in the savings bank and one or two little extras at the farm. One day Arthur stuck a bouquet of barley on his father's grave; but Mary plucked it off again, declaring that it was irreverent. And when Arthur said: "Why, to goodness? He'd rejoice same as we do over the abundance of the fields and like to feel a bunch was decorating his grave"; she replied:

"Nothing but flowers did ought to decorate a grave, Arthur. 'Tisn't the place for barley. What would the neighbours think?"

"They'd think 'twas a jolly good idea."

"You might as well ask the fishermen to put fish there," said she.

"Well, in Cornwall they decorate the churches with fish at a harvest festival, so I've heard. 'Loaves and fishes'—why not?"

Mary sniffed.

Summer slipped into autumn; the mornings and evenings grew chill; dew lay thick on the meadows at sunrise, and the fields were grey with cobwebs at dawn. Large spiders were seen in the houses, scuttling across the floors, or sitting on the ceilings, and the berries in the hedges turned scarlet and black.

Arthur heard in a roundabout way that somebody else had his eye on Emma Major, and lost no time in renewing his suit.

One Sunday afternoon he persuaded her to walk along the cliffs with him. She came rather unwillingly, wearing a new fur collar clipped round her neck. Arthur noticed it immediately, and his heart sank.

"You've got a new fur, I see," he began almost before they had gone a quarter of a mile.

"I have," said she, "don't you like it?"

"Not much."

"Oh! I'm sorry you think it's ugly."

"I didn't say that. It don't suit you all the same."

"Perhaps I'd better go back then. You won't like to be seen with me in such a hideous thing!"

Arthur thought: "We've begun badly. But that man gave it to her for certain."

"Who gave it to you, anyhow?" he asked bluntly.

"Well, I never! As if you had any right to ask that!" cried Emma. "Never you mind!"

"Sorry, Em. Don't be offended. I don't care if the King of England gave it to you. And it's not so bad really. But I'd have given you a much better one myself."

This received no response. They walked some way in silence and then Emma said:

"If you really want to know, father gave me this collar—and if you don't like it, I do."

"It isn't so bad. Yes, I do like it, after all," said Arthur, mightily relieved. "It suits you, anyhow—I'm sorry I said it didn't. I was only teasing you, Em. You'd look a proper queen in anything, you would. And I'd give you a whole furry coat if I could. And so I will—or so I would—if——"

"How's your cousins to Lydmouth?" asked Emma. "Did they ever call on the green-grocer?"

"I don't know. I never think about 'em. But I do think about you, Emma, and I want to have a tell with you to-day. Pitch here."

He spread a mackintosh on the ground in a snug nook on the hillside overlooking the sea and beckoned her to sit down. She settled herself on it.

"It's not too cold, is it?" said Arthur. "You won't catch a chill, I hope."

"I never catch anything," declared Emma, "except mackerel."

"Do you remember once last summer you and me sat on a boat, and I axed you to kiss me, Emma?"

She nodded.

"Well, that was only the start of it. I was going to ax for a lot more, only you looked such a fairy, and I began at the wrong end. I've loved you with all my heart and soul for months and months—I swear I have—and 'pon my life I don't see how I can carry on without you. In a word I want to marry you, Emma—something properly shocking, cruel, I

want to marry you. I'd—I'd snatch the sun out of the sky for you, if I could, and the sunshine out of the sea. Will you marry me, Em ? ”

Emma paused ; Arthur laid his hand on hers. But Emma carefully removed it.

“ No, Arthur,” said she, “ I don't think I will. In fact, I'm terrible sure I won't—thank you all the same.”

Arthur was extremely surprised and stared into her face incredulously.

“ Deuce take it ! ” he exclaimed. “ You won't ? Ah ! You're playing the old game, I suppose ? Hide and seek.”

“ 'Tis you play games, not me. I'm deadly serious.”

“ ‘ Deadly's ’ the word, Emma. And I could have sworn you was beginning to love me.”

“ 'Tis your own fault you get left, Arthur. Love may be a lark to you ; but what about all the girls—I forget their names, there's so many. All red ones, though. How you find them I don't know.”

“ Red devils ! ”

“ And be it as it will, I ain't going to marry a poly-gamist—not if I know it.”

Arthur sprang up and said :

“ A *what* ? ”

“ You know—because you are one ! ”

“ Me a poly-gamist ? You silly fool, you've got to be married first.”

“ Well,” retorted Emma, flaring up, “ You're axing me to marry you, ain't you ? ”

"Who told you there was such things?"

"I weren't born yesterday, Arthur!"

"I wish you'd never been born at all then."

Emma smiled to herself.

"'Tis Joe," went on Arthur. "'Tis that canting blighter, Joe. I'm getting properly fed up with Joe."

"Truth's truth, anyway, and it wouldn't suit me to be one of a crowd. All or none's my view of a husband."

"Women's a lot too greedy over the men," said Arthur crossly.

"There!" cried Emma, sitting up and pointing at him. "That shows you think like a poly-gamist, even if you ain't one. There's some you've chucked and some have chucked you—and——"

"You needn't go into the blasted past, Emma. I've done with the lot of you, now. I'll never look at another girl. I won't marry at all."

"So long as you understand my point of view, Arthur," said Emma, feeling a little sorry for him.

"Oh, yes; but I was hoping you were just the one to make me a good wife and steady me down, like Uncle Dick said once. But you don't care to try, seemingly. I'm not up to your mark, I know."

"'Tisn't so much you ain't good enough, Arthur. I'm only a faulty human creature myself——"

"Did Joe say you was faulty?"

"Don't want nobody to tell me that."

"You're an angel barring the wings—at least I thought you was."

"Say no more, Arthur, and come home. I'm getting cold."

She jumped up and started running down the hillside. Arthur joined her, and together they hurried home, he making breathless suggestions, she not heeding them. He followed her to her father's cottage door, where she smiled amiably enough and said:

"Us'll always be friends and respect each other, I hope?"

"'Friends'?" exclaimed Arthur as tragically as he was able. "Never! 'Tis love or nothing between me and you. I'll very likely drown myself!"

"No, Arthur, you won't," declared Emma, bursting into laughter. "Not while there's a red girl left on earth."

And she slammed the door in his face. At this moment who should come round the corner of the cottage on to the beach carrying a wisket of fish, but Arthur's mother; he did not immediately see her, and shouted through the window:

"I will! I will-drown myself! I'll make a hole in the water this very night, sure as death!"

A faint tinkle of laughter floated out of the cottage. It was then that Arthur, turning away, beheld Mary Varwell. In her massive dignity she confronted him, and said:

"Do I hear a son of mine? What are you saying, Arthur?"

"A hole in the water was what I said."

"And thank the watching Lord only I heard you. How dare you, Arthur? And brought up by me!"

She subsided against an upturned boat and blew out her cheeks.

"'Twas said to frighten Emma Major, not you. I've offered, and she's turned me down."

"Heaven be merciful! Emma turned you down! Why?"

"Says I'm a poly-gamist!"

"What do she know about such creatures? Or you either? The girl's a fool!"

"No—she's long ways short of a fool. I stood up for myself; but I know mighty well what she means."

"Do you? Perhaps you'll tell me then?"

Mary rose and they started to walk back to the farm together, Arthur carrying the fish.

"Cousin Joe's been on about me, I expect," he said dolefully. "He hates me. In fact you may say he hates everybody who is anybody."

"The young dog! The varmint!" spluttered Mary. "I'd like to wring his neck. And if you was a man, Arthur, you'd do it yourself. Lying, slandering anarchist. I'll talk to Emma!"

She suddenly stopped, turned and was about to go down the road again to talk to Emma,

when Arthur seized her and forced her to follow him.

"No, no," he said, much alarmed. "You leave her alone. Emma's all right. If anybody can bring her round, it's me. Emma asks a good bit from a man, but I wouldn't say she isn't worth it."

"Well, you know best," said Mary. "But *she* ain't the only girl in the world, though she may think so."

"She's the only girl for me," muttered Arthur despondently.

He ate his supper in silence, or rather he ate no supper, but drank a good deal of beer. Even Mary's heart melted slightly. She gave him a wine-glass full of brandy before he went to bed. Then she planted herself outside his door, that he might not issue forth to make a hole in the water. She heard him toss about for an hour; then came a few snores, then the regular breathing of one asleep, and she stole to her own room. She spent another hour praying that Emma's heart might be changed towards her Arthur. The boards were hard under her knees; but she noticed them not.

The next morning Arthur came down to breakfast quite cheerful, and Mary made no allusion to Emma. Instead she began to talk about Aunt Jenifer's birthday party, and told Arthur that it was time he decided on a present.

"I have decided," Arthur said.

"Have you indeed? And what may it be, Arthur?"

“ Ah! A secret, mother—even from you. My present’s going to take the shine out of all the rest—that’s all I can tell you.”

“ He’s all right,” thought Mary. “ Like his father—always bobs up again after he’s been down. But I like him a lot better than I liked his father.”

Sometimes Mary permitted secret thoughts like this one to form themselves into words in her mind, for everyone is honest with himself occasionally.

MISS JENIFER VARWELL began to make arrangements for her famous birthday party quite three weeks before the time came, and not a day passed but what she held an important conversation about it with Lydia.

"Coloured wine glasses we must have," she said one morning. "No feast be complete without 'em; and two bottles of port, Lyddy, and three plum cakes, and one sponge cake for me, because I can't eat plums at my time of life. And I'll put on my purple silk gown with the lace collar and cuffs, if it ain't moth-eaten. Last time I wore it was to Arthur's christening, I believe."

She chuckled, and Lydia replied.

"'Tis perfect, Miss Varwell. I looked at it yesterday, and a week afore the party I'll take it out and hang it in front of the fire, so that the creases'll drop out."

"The lace will be a thought yellow, I'm afraid. 'Tis real Honiton, Lyddy, and my own grandmother made it over a hundred and fifty year ago."

"'Tis preserved wonderful," said Lydia. "There's no lace like Devonshire lace for wearing."

"Nor no flesh like ours for lasting either—

look at me, Lyddy—nigh eighty year old—yet I can walk down to the foreshore with the youngest, and back again, without an arm ! ”

“ So you can ! ” came a well-known voice through the open window. “ So you can, my old dear ; and so can I, when I’m sober. But when I ain’t, an arm’s very welcome to me.”

“ What may you be come for, Richard ? ” asked Jenifer, “ so early in the day ? Us be talking secrets and don’t want you here.”

“ Secrets ! ” cried Uncle Dick. “ Then in I walk.”

And he did walk in, flourishing his cap and bowing to his sister.

“ Ha ! ” said he. “ ’Tis your birthday be in the wind, I expect. If you want help with the drinks, I’m at your service, Jenifer. ’Tis well known such things be beyond the intelligence of women. There wasn’t a woman yet knew good port from bad port ; or the difference between champagne and cider ; or if there was, she was a bad ’un. So you leave the drinks to me and look after the victuals. At victuals a woman shines, I grant you, though women be outshone by males even in the kitchen, when it comes to chefs, Jenifer.”

“ Us don’t want your advice, thank you, Richard ; Lyddy and I can be trusted to look after the table, whether it be liquids or solids. You look after a good birthday gift for me, my dear, and I promise you I’ll look after a good drink for you.”

"No fear! My gift's——"

"Don't tell me! Don't tell me, Dick," piped the old woman. "I want it to be a surprise—I do love surprises!"

"What, at your time of life? Be there still surprises left in the world for one as be up four score years?"

"Plenty, Richard; and I won't say but what I'll surprise *you* one day, my dear."

"I bet you will, and not only me, eh?"

He poked her gently in the side with his stick, and they laughed together.

"I be going to make my last will and testament on my birthday, Dick. Yes, I be. That's the time for it. But what I be going to put in it be known to nobody, least of all to myself. It all depends—it all depends."

"My! Us'll have to be on our best behaviour that day, Lyddy," said Uncle Dick. "Well, I just blew in to see how you was, Jenifer, and now I'll blow out again. Grand weather, ain't it?"

"Grand, Mr. Varwell. You'd never think we was up to our knees in October."

"Pour him a glass of sloe gin afore he goes, Lyddy," said Miss Varwell, and Lyddy did so. Whatever she might think about her disreputable brother, Jenifer never let him go without a sip of something.

"Ah!" he said, "this is better than the stuff Tom gave us down along last summer. I've never forgotten it. The taste of it rises in me yet of a night time. But this! Thank

you, my old dear—here's to your birthday party ! ”

He drained the glass and went out, singing a doubtful song.

When he had gone, Miss Jenifer turned to Lydia and said :

“ You be a friend of Emma Major, ban't you, Lyddy ? ”

“ Yes, Miss Varwell ; her and me gets on very well together. ”

“ Do she confide in you at all ? ”

“ Not much, ” said Lydia cautiously.

“ It seems to me that her and Arthur haven't been about together so oft of late. ”

“ No—— ”

“ Have something happened, then ? Have they quarrelled ? ”

“ Not quarrelled exactly, Miss Varwell. ”

“ Parted, then ? ”

“ Well—perhaps ! ”

“ Have she turned him down, do you think ? ”

“ Perhaps she have, ” said Lydia, well knowing the truth.

“ I'm sorry for it. She'd have made the man a good wife ; she'd have steadied him. I'd like to see 'em joined in wedlock, they two. ”

“ She's off him at present ; but maybe 'twill come right in the end. ”

“ I'd like for it to. ”

“ She's a very independent creature, is Emma, Miss Varwell. Riches wouldn't tempt her. 'Tis character counts with her. She isn't sure about Arthur's character, I reckon. ”

"You can't be sure about anybody's character till you've lived with 'em for two years, Lydia."

"Can't you, Miss Varwell?"

"No, you cannot."

"I daresay that's true," sighed Lydia. "Two years—a long time."

"Where's Joe? I haven't seen him for a fortnight," said Jenifer. "He promised to take me for a row on the sea the first fine day. Well, it's been fine for seven days, haven't it?"

"I haven't seen him neither, Miss Varwell; but I reckon he'll come if he said he would. He always keeps his word, Joe do."

She sighed again.

"Have you ever seen Joe smile?" asked Jenifer suddenly.

"Never!" replied Lydia.

"Well—a man as never smiles is a fool; but Joe ain't—so what is he?"

"Somebody as *could* smile even though he never *does*, Miss Varwell!"

"I reckon the woman as makes him smile will be the woman he loves."

"And who loves him, perhaps," murmured Lydia.

"And now go about your work, my dear, and leave me to plan my party. I like sitting here planning it all out in my head. If it's half as successful as my thoughts make it, 'twill be the finest party Yellow Sands have ever known."

"I'm sure it will be," said Lydia.

JOE kept his promise and appeared the following Sunday at Miss Varwell's cottage with an invitation to come rowing with him.

"I will then," said Jenifer, though she was not feeling very grand that day. "Always ready to come on the sea with you, Joe. Whatever you be on land, you're trustworthy on the sea."

Arthur was there, and said:

"You look out he don't drown you, Aunt Jenny, because you're a blasted capitalist."

"Shut up, you silly fool," growled Joe, "or I'll drown *you*."

"I shouldn't care much if you did—now," replied Arthur gloomily.

"Come along with us, Arthur," said Miss Jenifer.

"No, thanks—two's company on the sea, same as on the land."

Joe went down to the beach to make the boat ready, while Lydia wrapped Miss Varwell in shawls and tied a thick veil round her head. Arthur accompanied her to the shore, and she said to him:

"Why be you so down-daunted, my dear?"

"I've had a stroke of bad luck," answered he.

"You'll have a good many in your time, I

daresay—same as I've had, and everybody who is anybody in this world have had and will go on having. And why not? Life would be a tame business if all went right, and us always got what us wanted. I used to like to be up against the thorns sometimes, though I like better not to be, of course——”

She laughed.

“Don't worry, Arthur—there's nothing you can't live down if you try.”

“Ah! You've never lost what I've lost, Aunt Jenifer!”

“Perhaps I've lost something bigger. And who knows but what you may find what you've lost, my dear.”

“You're wise, but you're old, Aunt Jenny——”

“Yes, Arthur. And 'tis better to be a young fool, like you, than an old sage like me, no doubt: so be glad you're alive and on the right side of thirty, instead of on the eve of eighty, like me.”

Joe was waiting for her at the water's edge, and the two nephews handed her into the boat. There she settled herself into the stern with her face towards Joe. He pulled out into deep water and they were soon a mile away from Yellow Sands. The sea was calm and the autumn sun still had heat in it. The rowlocks clicked and squeaked as the shiny leather belts of the oars turned in them, and the water sucked at the keel.

The two sat silent, for neither seemed

inclined for speech, It was not Jenifer's way to lecture Joe, or to probe for the secrets in his heart. She watched him furtively, however, and saw that his thoughts were far off, and not with her. Perhaps he was thinking of the Cause, or of Lydia; or of the fishes in the sea. A deep frown stood between his eyes. The frail old woman liked the sight of his great strength as he bent to the rowing. Once she did speak, and once he answered,

"You ought to be rowing a young maiden, instead of an old woman, Joe," she said.

"Perhaps you think so," he replied; "but you're wrong."

And Miss Jenifer said no more. She enjoyed being on the sea; it reminded her of her youth, when she would often join the men in their boat and help them to haul in their nets. Her strength had been like that of a man.

While she reflected on the past Joe dreamed of the future. Once he thought it would be grand to have Lydia in the boat with him; but then he thrust away this enchanting idea, swept the seductive image from his mind, and called up in its place the vision of a million out-of-works. But that only increased his bitterness.

After an hour's rowing Miss Varwell said:

"We'll go back now, Joe, if you please. I'd like to stay out here all day; but it wouldn't like me."

So Joe pulled her home; and on the beach they saw Mary Varwell.

She lumbered up to them as they landed, and said crossly:

"Whatever are you thinking of, Joe, taking your aunt on the ocean at her age, and so late in the year? I've been waving to you to come back for the last half hour—and you wouldn't see me."

"I saw you," said Joe grimly.

"You did! Then more shame to 'e—and if your aunt don't die of pneumonia to-morrow it won't be your fault!"

"I wanted for to go, Mary," said Jenifer. "I axed him to take me. And I liked it and I didn't see you waving, and if I had I shouldn't have come in all the same. And I ban't going to die to-morrow, I hope—not till my party's over, my dear."

Joe had gone off with a deadly look at Mary, and she and Lydia helped Miss Varwell into her bath chair and pushed her home. For in spite of Jenifer's boasts that she could walk to the shore and back without an arm, she was rarely allowed to do so. She submitted to Mary's scolding in patience, and then said:

"At my age I must be allowed to do what I like, Mary. After eighty it don't matter what a body does, so long as it pleases her. At ninety I'll promise to be more careful—but not afore then."

"You joke, but you did ought to consider our feelings," said Mrs. Varwell. "There was I all in a flutter about you, and Joe ready to upset you, I dare say, and pretend——"

"There, there! Keep your nerve, Mary. I'd trust Joe afore the lot of you on the sea——"

"A foolhardy thing to do, whether or no."

They reached the cottage and, after a few parting admonitions and advice to Lydia, Mary withdrew.

"My sister-in-law's a humbug!" said Miss Jenifer to her maid. "She wouldn't care much if I did drop to-morrow—in fact she'd be glad, I daresay."

"Oh no, you mustn't say that, Miss Varwell," said Lydia. "'Tis just her way."

"A tiresome way—and don't you take none of her advice—I ain't going straight to bed, and I ain't going to have brandy and milk for my tea, and I ain't going to stay indoors all to-morrow!"

"You shall do just whatever you like," said Lydia, "but now you let me take off your shoes and stockings, because you wetted 'em getting out of the boat."

"I'm growing sleepy," said Miss Jenifer. "I'll sit here by the fire and doze a bit."

That evening she talked about Joe to Lydia and praised him a good deal, and the heart of Lydia grew warm and comforted.

TIME had not been standing still at Lydmouth in the wool shop of Minnie and Nellie, or in the greengrocer's shop next door.

Miss Tabitha Travers had not succeeded in keeping William away from the twins. Not only did he go to tea with them; he took them for a walk afterwards and went the length of the parade twice, with one on each side before the eyes of everybody. And next day he complained of a stiff neck, and his aunt told him the cause of it, saying something about "wagging your head from side to side for an hour or more between two little bantam hens—what do you expect?!" But she could not quench his good humour.

And now a curious and difficult thing overtook him; little by little he found himself growing extremely interested in Minnie and Nelly. The difficulty lay in the fact that they both exerted the same degree of fascination over him. He could not prefer one before the other; and this worried the simple-hearted man, for he was religious and thought that to cast his eyes upon two women at once was contrary to morals, if not to nature. "If I was a Turk," thought he, "I believe I'd want both of 'em; and that would be a simple way out of

the difficulty. But being a Christian man——”

He hid his feeling very carefully from Aunt Tabitha, and, when she revealed her gathering uneasiness, made light of the twins in this manner :

“ They did ought to be labelled same as they label everything in their little shop ; and neater labels I never did see in any establishment. In fact neatness be the ruling spirit of their lives.”

But Miss Travers never responded when he praised them ; and once or twice, after he had run in to give the twins a bunch of grapes, or buy a packing needle, or some such trifle, she would tell him when he came back that he had missed a customer, because she had been unable to find what was wanted. And never did she buy her darning wool off Minnie or Nelly, but took the trouble to walk a quarter of a mile to the big drapery shop on the parade, though the wool there was more expensive and of inferior quality. And when William bought a pair of hand-knitted green socks from the twins, and gave an order for two more pairs of the same colour, she almost refused to darn them at all, and said they were badly knitted and went into holes faster than any socks she had ever seen before, whereas in fact they lasted months longer than the socks she had been accustomed to buy for him. These pitiful and petty details sorely tried the poor man, who had a large nature, and he grew sadly troubled.

As to the twins, they were women, and could not fail to feel triumphant, and as though they had made good in male eyes—a thing they never hoped to do. They could not believe it at first, and twittered about it, in their bird-like way, and wondered secretly if such a thing had really happened. But time cleared away their doubts, and thus they spoke together one evening in October, when the day's work was done.

"He's a king of men, no doubt," said Minnie, and Nellie agreed.

"A king of men."

"And 'tis false modesty to pretend he comes in the shop on business, so why do he come?"

"Why do he come?" Nelly asked.

"Us have no secrets, and us feel alike about all created things and manners and customs. Therefore us feel alike about Mr. Travers, and, so far as I know, in my great inexperience, I might very near say I be got to love him."

"To love him—me too," admitted Nelly.

"So us be arrived at the same fearful conclusion. We both love him," went on Minnie, "and between us 'tis vain to try to hide anything. Very well then. That's how it stands with us. If he was to offer to marry me, I do believe I could find it in me to take the man, well knowing as I could make him such a partner as his soul craves, and save him from his aunt. And if he was to offer to marry you, you'd very near do exactly the same."

"Exactly the same."

" 'Tis a tower of strength that we can both look at it so open," continued Minnie, " because I lay my life not many sisters in such a situation could do so. And there would rise up ill feeling and bitterness and jealousy. But not with us, never with us, we being so much one as they Siamese twins was, only separate. And since we can face the facts, the sole question as I see it, be, which he's addicted to. 'Tis clear as light that one of us will be called to go next door, and one stop here ; and further than next door from you I wouldn't go, nor you from me."

" Further than next door I certainly would not go," Nelly declared,

" Then 'tis up to Willie—or Mr. Travers, I should say. If what we feel be brewing is true, then he'll be husband to one of us, and brother-in-law to t'other, or us ban't women of the world and know nothing. And what us have got to weigh up is where he's turning."

" He don't often see us apart," said Nelly. " But sometimes he do."

" I've noticed nothing to mark me out, nor yet you," said Minnie. " When he's along with me, he praises you."

" And when he's along with me, he praises you."

" And when he's along with his aunt, he praises us both, so Jenny, their maid-of-all-work, told me. But she don't encourage him. Well, thank the Lord, 'tis for him to decide and not us. You praise me to him, no doubt, same as I

praise you to him; and I expect he's still keeping an open mind. But he can't have both, because this is the British Isles, so he'll have to come to it, and whichever 'tis shall have the blessing of the other one, of course. In the meantime us must wait and watch."

"Watch and pray," said Nelly.

"Pray for him to be guided right," said Minnie, "though you'd think, from his point of view, it didn't matter the toss of a penny which he took."

"Love be lightning quick to see differences."

"There ain't none. The only difference to name is your chronicle corn on your left foot. So far as higher things be concerned you couldn't say any was to be found. And now us won't mention the subject again, but talk of Cousin Jenifer's party instead. Only ten days now, Nelly."

"Only ten days now! I'm that excited, Minnie. I do love a party."

"God send it will be fine, or us won't be able to wear they tulle scarves, and our hats will be spoilt."

"Oh, God send it will be fine. I must wear my tulle scarf!"

Meanwhile Mr. Travers was seriously tackling the problem of the twins. He was in love with them both, and tried with all his might to separate them from each other in his mind, so that he might set to work to court one; but though a man with good sight and hearing, he could not do it, and he never could tell,

if only one were there, whether it was Minnie or Nelly; and he knew his manners too well to ask.

When they were together he knew them apart easily, because Nelly was the echo and Minnie the voice; but, alone, he could not distinguish them and felt it an unnatural thing, in his own words, "to offer for either until he knew t'other from which." He knew that he was a success with them, but there again he could not find out if one was more attracted to him than the other. For they greeted him in the same way, smiled in the same way, and said the same things. And he knew that if in the morning one passed an opinion on his pipless oranges, or praised a box of dates, the other would do the same, to a word, in the afternoon.

"They be as alike as a pair of poached eggs—drat the darlings!" said Willie to himself.

EVERYBODY was glad when Miss Varwell's birthday morning dawned fine. The autumn mists soon rolled out of the valley and sunshine filled the combe.

Lydia was the first to wish Miss Jenifer many happy returns, when she drew up the blind. No presents were to be given before the party, however, and the old woman spent a quiet morning, preparing the parlour for her visitors. A fire was lit and clean lace curtains hung in the window. Lydia placed vases of michaelmas daisies and chrysanthemums on the window sill, and polished the piano till you could see your face in it.

"Mr. Varwell will be sure to play the piano," she said.

"'Tis cruel out of tune, I'm afraid," Miss Varwell replied. "Us must get the piano-tuner to Exeter to put it in order, Lyddy."

Under the window stood a large round table spread with a handsome plush cloth, on which a design of coloured roses had been painted. Lydia removed this presently, and began to set the table according to Miss Jenifer's plans. Round the edge she placed wine glasses, first a red glass, then a green, until they formed a circle; inside the ring she made another, of

cakes and fruit, and in the centre arranged a glass dish of grapes. Two bottles of port wine, and a pile of plates were also on the table, and one or two little bowls of asters from the garden.

Meanwhile Jenifer had gone upstairs to dress, a task that she wished to perform alone.

Lydia was putting the finishing touches to the table, when the window was darkened suddenly. She looked up and saw Joe Varwell gazing in, his arms on the sill. He stared at the table, frowned and said :

"A shameful sight! A disgrace to any decent thinking person."

"Good powers, you, Joe!" cried Lydia. "You made me jump. The party ain't begun yet."

"I ain't coming to the party. But I want you half a minute. Where's Aunt Jenifer?"

"Upstairs, dressing."

"I'll come in then."

He heaved himself over the sill, upsetting a vase, but Lydia called out :

"You'd best wait and come to the party through the door, Joe."

"Wallowing on the fat of the land!" exclaimed Joe, surveying the feast.

"No, Joe. A bottle of wine and a plum cake ain't the fat of the land."

"They glasses mean capital, don't they?" said Joe. Then he gave Lydia a packet done up untidily in brown paper. "There's my gift for her," he went on, "and see she has it.

A thing I value a very great deal, I may tell you. But I've got hopes of Aunt Jenifer yet. She'll listen to me, and that's more than most will."

"You must give it yourself, Joe," said Lydia. "And indeed you must come to the party."

"Not me. There's only one party I know about, and that's the Socialist Party."

He turned to go, then hesitated, blushed and stammered out :

"Last night Emma Major said you was a good bit under the weather. Yes, you ; and, if that's so, you did ought to have come to me. I ordered you, didn't I ? "

Lydia turned red and smiled, and Joe went on in a loud voice :

"If that man you care about be giving you trouble, I'll mighty soon make him see sense."

"That's what everybody wants him to see, Joe. Properly kind of you to think of me."

"Owing to my past feelings I'm wishful for you to be all right—you being an orphan, Lydia."

"Always so kind to help anybody, you are, Joe."

"I'm out for justice, that's all. Don't think I've got any other reason. And if this chap's offered to marry you, and you're fool enough to take him, then marry you he shall, if I've got to drag him to church myself."

"Lor', Joe, would you do that for me ? "

"Yes," declared Joe. "For you I'd do it."

"You can't make a chap marry you ! "

"If the dog's gone back on it, have him up

for breach, and knock his money out of him."

"He ain't got none, Joe. He's like you—hates the capitalists. Never mind him, and don't you fret about me."

"'Tis you be fretting, not me. And I'll have his name—this instant moment, please. Out with it, Lyddy!"

"No, Joe!"

"Don't be a little fool. I'm pretty clever and far-seeing. I understand life—and a hateful thing it is. The chap would be dust in my hands. An anarchist knows one thing, and that's the time for direct action. So best you tell me his name."

"I can't, Joe!" murmured Lydia.

"I won't knock his head off," said Joe, "or any deed like that. I'll just talk sense, man to man, and let him understand if he don't get on with it, he'll be up against me. You're about the best girl ever came out of Yellow Sands, and if he don't know it 'tis more'n time the beggar did. Don't you worry. I'll be at your wedding yet."

"I hope so," sighed Lydia. "I shouldn't much care about it if you wasn't."

"If you feel a doubt he's cooling off, chuck the fool afore he chucks you. Change your mind."

"He has chucked me, in a manner of speaking," said Lydia; "but I'm sure I shall never change my mind."

"More shame to you then—to love where

you ain't wanted," said Joe. "I'll find out his name myself—yes, I will—and if he gives me any cheek, you won't know him next time you see him. You're a poor creature, Lyddy, to hanker after trash like him."

"Poor every way, Joe; but you can pleasure me in one thing if you've a mind to. I'll beg you to do one little thing for me."

"Why should I?"

"Promise! It's well in your power."

"You can't come it over me, you know," said Joe cautiously.

"I know I can't—only too well. 'Tisn't for myself, but for somebody else. You do nice deeds, Joe, but you do 'em in such a fierce way, as though you was going to bite our heads off, and hated us all the time."

"Who is it?" demanded Joe.

"One as be weak and can't help herself."

"Everybody's weak if they're poor."

"No, they ain't. You ain't weak, Joe. Now promise?"

"For you then, I will; if it ain't against my principles."

Lydia gave him back the parcel and said with a happy smile:

"You've promised. Then come to the party and give that to your Aunt Jenifer with your own hand. She's counting on you. She wants all her family to stand by her."

"You sly little devil!" said Joe.

"A promise!"

"She won't hear no soft speeches from me."

"She don't want none. She only wants all her family round her on her birthday."

"Then I'll look in, if I must, but I wouldn't do it for no one else but you."

Miss Varwell's voice was heard calling "Lyddy" from upstairs. Lyddy ran to the door and cried:

"Yes, miss!"

"Be the party beginning, Lyddy?"

"Not yet, miss. I'll come up over in a minute."

Then she turned to Joe, and said:

"Thank you dearly. You'll never repent it, I promise you. You go and put on your 'Sundays' and come back in half an hour."

"I won't put on my 'Sundays'," he said emphatically. "Nobody didn't ought to have any Sunday clothes with a million men out of work!"

"Lyddy!" came Miss Jenifer's voice, and Lydia ran upstairs.

Joe glared at the table once more, and shook his fist at the grapes.

"Blasted capitalist!" he muttered, and leapt out of the window as he heard Miss Jenifer coming downstairs.

She was dressed in the gown trimmed with her grandmother's Honiton lace; her hair was rolled into a black net and smoothed over her brow.

"You look grand!" declared Lydia.

"You'm flustered," said Miss Varwell.

"Joe's been here," replied the girl. "He's

coming to your party, all right. He's a flustering man, Joe is. I can't tell whether to laugh or cry when I'm along with him, miss."

"A stormy creature. He'll never know no peace, nor let anybody else."

"But such a good meaner," sighed Lydia.

Miss Varwell walked round the table and peered at the things upon it.

"Be it all to your liking, miss?" asked Lydia.

"Very fine, indeed," said Jenifer. "Coloured wine glasses always give a look of richness; and so do grapes."

"Mr. Bartlett at the 'Wheatsheaf' says there won't be no charge for the wine glasses if they all go back safe."

"An honest man is Bartlett. And, no doubt, his wine's honest too. You can open them bottles now. There's enough cake?"

"More'n enough, and I've opened the bottles a'ready. Be you feeling pretty peart for the party, miss?"

"Yes, I'm up for anything to-day. But I'm feared I shan't last out."

"Have a tiny drop before they come. You ain't looking forward to your party very much, I'm afraid."

"I'm looking forward to the end of it," said Jenifer. "That's always the best part of a party. But I won't drink nothing yet—else I'll go to sleep."

Lydia slid her hand into her pocket and brought out something wrapped in tissue paper, which she presented to Miss Varwell, saying:

"I've ventured to give you a little gift myself, miss, and I do hope you'll be graciously pleased to accept it."

Miss Jenifer smiled, and unwrapped a pair of scarlet woollen mittens.

"I knitted 'em, to keep your hands warm of an evening," Lydia said.

"Did you now, cried Jenifer, much pleased. "I never! My first gift! And red's my favourite colour, too."

"So Arthur said, miss."

"Kiss me, Lyddy."

"Lord, miss!" exclaimed Lydia, drawing back.

"Kiss me, I say."

"So I will then." And Lydia stooped and kissed Miss Varwell's cheek. "And I wish you many more birthdays yet."

"Not many more," said Jenifer. "This be the eightieth. Ten more's enough. Then I'll be ready to go."

"And there's all eternity for birthdays, too, miss."

"I doubt they keep 'em in heaven, Lyddy."

"I hope they do—and give each other fine gifts perhaps. More time to do kind things up there."

"Plenty of time to do 'em here. Nobody's ever too busy to be kindly. 'Tis the good will lacks, not the time. Fetch thicky table from the corner, and put it alongside me for my presents. I shan't like none better than yours, I expect."

Lydia fetched a table and set it beside Miss Jenifer. She was thinking all the time of Joe, looking forward to the moment when he came again. She knew that he would keep his promise, and a feeling of triumph kept rising in her because she had been able to influence him. "I believe I could always manage him," she thought. "He's simple really—he's got a great, big, simple heart underneath his fiery opinions."

Miss Varwell sat in her chair by the fire, wondering what her presents were going to be.

"Ain't it time the party began to come?" she asked Lydia. "I don't like this waiting my dear; I want for it to begin."

"It's going to begin now!" cried Lydia. "Here's Mr. Richard first to come."

"Is he sober?" asked Jenifer.

"Very steady, indeed, miss, and very smart too."

"Hide they bottles for the minute."

Lydia hastened to hide the port bottles in a corner beside the piano, as Uncle Dick's knock sounded on the door. Then she ran out to let him in.

WHEN the room was empty, Miss Jenifer rose from her chair, and reached up to see herself in the mirror above the fireplace ; but she could not see so high, and sank back into her chair disappointed.

"Serve me right for being a vain old fool," she said to herself. "What do I want to look in the glass for, at my age ? Still, 'tis something to live to be eighty ! 'Twasn't easy. If I hadn't willed to live, I'd have gone out long ago—that time I had the pneumonia, and again that time I was nearly drowned. But I reckon I shall go next time death calls—shan't have the strength to fight 'un."

Mr. Richard Varwell now came into the room, hurried across to his sister and kissed her.

"Ha ! Ha ! my old bird !" he cried. "Going it, I see. Best of good wishes, Jenifer. And don't think I've forgotten your birthday. Far from it. Your present's here." He patted his head, winked, and added, "but you must wait a bit."

"You be looking pretty tidy for once," said Jenifer.

"My levée clothes—my court suit, Jenny !" said Richard, turning himself round about.

"Ha!" he exclaimed suddenly, sniffing the air. "I smell port!"

He began to search the room, while Lydia and Miss Jenifer looked on.

"A nose like a gun-dog you've got for drink," said Jenifer.

Uncle Dick soon discovered the bottles beside the piano, pounced on them, and brought them out into the open.

"You leave it alone," warned Jenifer. "'Tis the best Bartlett had."

"I know his best," said Richard, putting the bottles on the round table. "Very tidy drinking. I'll just make sure he's sent the three-shilling-a-bottle brand."

He poured out a glass, and Lydia cried in dismay.

"Oh, Mr Varwell, you musn't drink it afore the party's begun!"

"The party have begun, my child," responded Richard. "I'm the beginning of the party."

"The drinking ain't, however," said Jenifer.

"Where I am," declared Uncle Dick, "you'll mostly find the drinking has begun."

He tossed off the glass, smacked his lips, and nodded his head.

"Yes," said he, "that's his best tap. Not a wine you'd find at Buckingham Palace, I daresay; still a nice, harmless, plummy port. Have a thimbleful, Jenny? It wouldn't hurt a woodlouse."

But Jenifer shook her head.

"Here's Mr. Major and Emma with their

gifts," cried Lydia, looking through the window.

"Mr. Major's bringing——"

"Don't tell me—don't tell me what it is," said Jenifer. "I want the surprise of 'em."

Lydia went out, and Jenifer turned to Richard and whispered: "'Tis rumoured Emma have turned down Arthur!"

"Any pair of fools can wed," answered Uncle Dick, "but it takes one wise one to make a marriage. Emma doubts him."

"I'd like for her to take him. She could rule Arthur easy enough!"

"Ruling ain't marriage—only master and servant, or little better. Let the wife be the light of the house, but the husband the candlestick."

"You're so smart—for other people, Dick."

He sighed, then lifted his eyebrows, then rose to greet Mr. Major and Emma, who came in with gifts. Thomas brought a huge salmon peel, Emma a Cape heath flowering in a pot. She wore a peacock blue dress with a string of yellow beads, and a large, floppy straw hat, trimmed with yellow velvet; she had on white stockings and shoes. She looked a "picture," thought Jenifer Varwell, who liked Emma and admired her character.

"Bless you on your birthday, Miss Jenifer," said the girl, kissing Miss Varwell, "and I've brought 'e a pot plant, if you please."

"And thank you, Emma—a most beautiful affair, I'm sure," replied Jenifer, touching the pink blossoms. "Whatever is it?"

"A heath," put in Richard, who had somehow accumulated an extraordinary amount of general knowledge. "An African heath, Jenifer—comes from a thirsty land, that plant does."

Thomas approached carrying his contribution on a string passed through its gills, and said:

"I've fetched along this salmon peel, my dear—a very unusual fine fish—netted this morning."

"My, Tom!" she said. "Shines like silver."

"And be worth silver, I can tell you. 'Twas Joe caught it."

"Did he then? A marvel he be on the sea."

"Ay," said Thomas. "A pity he don't stick to the sea, and not bother his head about folks on shore."

"He's coming presently," said Lydia, who brought in a dish for the salmon peel and placed it on the table beside Jenifer. "He told me he was."

"I should hope so," exclaimed Emma. "I wonder what he'll give you, Miss Jenifer. Joe's gift will be something of a surprise."

"I love the surprises," murmured the old woman, looking at her presents.

"The flowers of the earth and the fruits of the sea are very good gifts indeed," sang Richard, and Jenifer answered:

"So they are then; but I wish the flower smelt, and the fish didn't."

"I'll help you to eat him," said Richard. "He's in my line."

"And where's your present, Dick?" asked Mr. Major.

"Up my sleeve, Tom. I ain't forgotten the day, I assure you. And as for Joe's present, it's a rope for you to hang yourself with, I expect, Jenifer. That's all Joe would give a bloated old capitalist like you."

"He said he'd open your eyes, miss," laughed Emma.

Jenifer answered:

"Did he? Well, they was open and seeing pretty clear a good many years afore Joe's opened."

"Joe's ain't opened at all yet," said Dick. "Blind as a new-born kitten is Master Joe—stumbling and fumbling about the world—'twould be pathetic if it wasn't so funny."

"He can see his way on the water all right, a master crabber," said Thomas. "I don't know what I'd do without him. But crabs don't satisfy him; crabs ain't enough."

"Well—there I'm with the chap—crabs don't get a man far," said Uncle Dick. "I like a crab as much as anybody, but once the crab's let down and my belly's satisfied, crabs cease to be interesting—then I'm game for anything, from philosophy to grand opera. Come and sit by me and let down a drop, Emma."

He signalled to Emma to sit beside him on a sofa near the port bottles, but Emma laughed and said:

"I'll sit by you, but I won't drink."

"No drinking yet," said Jenifer, as Richard

drank another glass of port. Then she turned to Thomas Major and whispered :

"What's this about Emma turning down my nephew, Arthur? Be it true?"

"So it stands, I believe, Jenifer."

"I'm sorry, then. She's just the wife for him. She's got character."

"But have 'e? The first thing a husband needs to reckon with is his own character. All happens according to that. A wife can do a lot, but she can't put character into a man. She's a right to expect to find it there."

"Arthur's got a kind heart, Tom—that's something better than character, you'd say?"

"I wouldn't, my dear. Nothing's better than character; and his heart's a few sizes too large, in Emma's opinion."

"Of course, he must keep off the other girls if he wants your girl."

"Just so!" said Thomas. "But we may see 'em tokened yet. He's got his virtues, and the world's a fine tonic to bring out the qualities in a young man, if the quality is there."

"Him and Emma are both so good as gold, I believe," said Jenifer, raising her voice.

"Gold?" cried Richard, coming over to them. "Don't you talk of gold like that, Jenny. There's naught in human shape that's half so good as gold, or so well to be trusted."

"Or so difficult to manage," said Thomas.

"Or so quick to take wing," said Dick.

"Or so easy to part from," said Jenifer.

"Where I hope we be going some of these

days, the streets will be paved with the stuff. That's all they think of it up there."

"And right too," agreed Richard. "Like me—what do I think of it? Look into my pockets, that'll tell you."

He pulled out the linings of his empty pockets and spun round like a top.

"All the same," he went on, "I respect the stuff. I don't despise it, not I. Yet if I had it, Lord knows what I should do with it."

"I know," laughed Emma. "Half you'd drink and half you'd give away."

"Cut the cake, Emma," said Jenifer. "The plum cake's for all you people, and the sponge cake's for me."

The cakes were cut and handed round. The afternoon sunlight streamed through the side window of the parlour, lending a rich glow to the old furniture, and sparkling in the wine glasses. The happy voices of the people in the room rose and fell, and from outside came the sound of sea-gulls calling over the sea.

AN hour or two earlier, Minnie and Nelly Masters had started to dress for the party. It was fine enough for them to wear their tulle scarves, and they were glad. They put on their terra-cotta coloured new dresses, with scarves and gloves to match, and funny little round hats with a bunch of berries at the side,

"My, we do look grand!" said Minnie, gazing into the glass.

"We do," Nelly cried. "I'd like for Willie to see us, Minnie. Do you think we might run round for something?"

"We might go for a pineapple to take Cousin Jenifer; but then wouldn't it look as if we went on purpose, Nelly, to show ourselves? We've got the grapes already, you see."

"Yes," said Nelly, her face falling. "We don't want to look like we'd done it on purpose."

But their luck was in, for as they set off, there was William on his shop doorstep, taking the air.

"Hullo! Hullo!" he said, bowing to the twins. "You do look fine. Peacocks ain't in it. Your cousin will be fair dazzled, my dears."

They twittered, and cried:

"Don't you tease, Mr. Travers. You're such a tease."

"William!" came a voice from the rear, "I want you!"

"There's Aunt Tabitha," he whispered, winking at Minnie and Nelly. "Perhaps I'll look in when you get back, so don't you take off them fine frill-de-dills. You keep 'em on. I'll be sure to come in."

The twins hurried off to catch the omnibus to Yellow Sands, arm-in-arm.

"What a man he is!" said Nelly. "Always a joke ready, and a friendly smile."

"Things be coming to a head, Nelly, but which is it to be? That's the question."

"'Tis beginning to get on my nerves," confessed Nelly.

"And on his aunt's also. She gived me a look like a thunder-cloud when I went to hang out the washing last Monday. She was doing the same t'other side the wall, and I thought 'twas funny us doing the identical thing, her and me, and I laughed. There! I couldn't stop. But she scowled, and jabbed in the pegs and went indoors without a word."

"'Tis jealousy, Minnie—a fearful thing, jealousy."

"You and me will never be jealous of each other, anyhow."

They hopped into the bus and hugged their parcels in their laps, murmuring together all the time. At the church of Yellow Sands they hopped out again, and hurried off on their little feet to Jenifer's cottage.

"The party's begun," said Minnie, seeing the

back of Uncle Dick's head in the window, and Emma's hat beside it. "The company's there."

They rapped on the door.

"Who's that?" said Richard. "Mr. B.?"

"No," replied Jenifer, "that ain't Baslow's knock. It'll be Minnie and Nelly Masters, our twin cousins, from the Berlin wool shop to Lydmouth."

Richard explained to Mr. Major, who had never met them.

"A pair of little go-by-the-ground virgins, that pipe like starlings," he said.

Lydia admitted them, and they trotted into the room, their presents in their arms.

"We be come, Cousin Jenifer!" said Minnie, and Nelly repeated:

"We be come, Cousin Jenifer!"

"And welcome, welcome both of you!" said Jenifer, kissing them.

"Congratulations on your birthday, my dear," said Minnie.

"—ulations on your birthday, my dear," echoed Nelly.

"Have you travelled pretty clever?" asked Jenifer.

"Very clever indeed, by the bus from Lydmouth."

"The bus from Lydmouth; very clever indeed."

"There's Cousin Dick, you see," said Jenifer, as Richard bowed to the pair, "and my dear friends, Mr. Major and his darter."

"Looking younger than ever, the pair of

you," said Dick. The twins exploded with laughter.

"How do you find yourself, Richard?" asked Minnie, when she could speak.

"I find myself more surprised every day to hear you lovely girls ain't married. How you escape the men I don't know."

The twins exploded again.

"Tee—hee—hee!" giggled Minnie. "What a cure!"

"What a cure," giggled Nelly. "Tee—hee—hee!"

"And how's Berlin wool looking up?" asked Dick.

"It ain't looking up," said Minnie, "it's looking down. Times ain't what they used to be."

"They never are," agreed Richard. "Me and the times have been going from bad to worse ever since I was born."

"Us make our own times," declared Jenifer. "And I don't hold as they're gone from bad to worse with me—quite the contrary, else my eightieth birthday wouldn't be one of the happiest of my life."

"Always content is Jenifer," said Dick. "This is Mr. Major," he went on to Minnie and Nelly. "The millionaire boat-owner, and his fine girl, Emma."

"Pleased to meet you, I'm sure," said the twins, and Minnie added:

"Us have met Miss Major already—her and Arthur——"

She looked round ; a painful silence greeted her. She blushed. Then it was not " a case " after all ?

Richard covered the moment by saying to Jenifer :

" Shall I pour these fairies a glass of port ? "

The twins exploded once more, and Jenifer said :

" No, Dick, us won't begin till Mary comes."

" My ! " cried Minnie, her eyes lighting on the salmon peel. " What .. a hugeous gert fish ! "

" A hugeous ' gert fish," Nelly cried.

" The presents," screamed Minnie. " The presents, Nelly ! We're forgetting the presents."

They flew to their parcels, rustled off the paper and displayed their gifts. Minnie had made a white lace cap trimmed with scarlet ribbons, and Nelly brought a string of scarlet beads.

Miss Jenifer took the cap and cried :

" My stars, Minnie ! What a wonderful affair ! "

" And I've ventured to bring you this string of red coral beads," said Nelly, " but only imitation ones, Jenifer—to be worn along with Minnie's cap."

Jenifer handled the presents and nodded her old head over them happily.

" You'll make her prouder than a peacock," said Richard.

" Wishing you the best of everything, Cousin Jenifer," said Minnie, and Nelly added :

"The best of everything!"

"What a picture you'll look, my dear," said Thomas.

"And red my favourite colour, too," piped Jenifer.

"We remembered that," said Minnie, and Nelly repeated:

"We remembered."

"Red be Joe's favourite colour, too," said Mr. Major. "D'you know Joe, ladies?"

"Us haven't seen him since he grew up," answered Minnie. "He's turned Bolshie, haven't he?"

"Wants to string up all you shopkeepers," laughed Uncle Dick.

"Oh, my!" shouted Nelly. "String us up, Richard?"

"We'll make him sing 'The Red Flag' when he comes along. A bomb-thrower. He'll have your wool shop in ruins some day."

"Our shop in ruins some day!" screamed Minnie. "Oh, dear!"

"There's a lot of they wicked ones at Lydmouth," said Nelly, "and not near enough policemen."

"Ah!" said Richard. "I always like to find a place where the bobbies run short. Here—I'll try this cap on, and the necklace, and then you'll see a fool in his cap and beads. How's that, children?"

Uncle Dick put on the cap and beads and capered about in the middle of the room. The twins exploded with laughter.

"Oh, what a scream!" cried Minnie, and Nelly called out:

"What a scream!"

"You take care, Dick," said Jenifer, and Thomas told Emma to rescue the gifts before Richard spoilt them.

"Will somebody pour me a glass of port, please?" said Richard, pretending to be an old lady, and everybody laughed.

"He's given me a pain in my side," screeched Minnie. "Oh, dear!"

"Oh, dear! Me too!" cried Nelly, out of breath. "A proper figure of fun."

"Funnier things presently," promised Richard, taking off the cap and necklace.

"What do you think, Cousin Jenifer, a new greengrocer have come next door to us—such a nice man."

"Oh, such a nice man," sighed Nelly, fanning herself.

"And we told him about you, and he sent along these here grapes, with his compliments." Minnie handed the bunch to Jenifer, who replied:

"I never! Did he, then? 'Twas a kind thought and you'll please to thank him from me, and say I ate 'em."

"Ah!" cried Richard, holding up his finger. "What's this I hear? A new greengrocer next door to our little Minnie and Nelly, and a bunch of grapes for Jenifer. Ah!"

He stood over the twins, wagging his finger, his head on one side, until they rocked up and

down with laughter and blushed like girls.

"And Mr. Travers have promised to call on Arthur Varwell some day and give him orders for fruit and vegetables," said Minnie, recovering at last.

"Did he?" said Richard. "I shall have to look into this. Which is it to be, Minnie?"

But the twins only laughed and rocked up and down with fun. Richard was still teasing them when Lydia ran in to say that Mrs. Varwell and Arthur had arrived.

"Now we must behave!" whispered Uncle Dick.

MARY VARWELL appeared in a wonderful dress covered with large, sprawling patterns, and a hat covered with large loops of black and white ribbon. Her full skirt dragged on the floor at the back, but was lifted in front by the corpulence of her figure. She carried a parcel. Every one made way for her as she swept up to Miss Varwell, kissed her and said :

"God bless you, Jenifer. I won't make no silly good wishes about happy returns at your age, because you and me are serious women. And the next world is the next, as we well know, and not this one. But I've brought you a shawl—a very fine, soft shawl to wear of evenings."

She unwrapped a large scarlet shawl, crocheted in wool; then catching sight of the twins, she nodded her head at them, saying :

"How de do, Minnie? How de do, Nelly? Both got here?"

"Yes," said Minnie genially, "we be come. I hope I see you well, Cousin Mary?"

"Hope I see you well, Cousin Mary?" said Nelly.

"No time to think of my health," answered Mary. "Arthur's taking the newspaper off his present, and here's mine."

With an expansive gesture, she shook out the shawl at Jenifer's feet.

"More red," said Richard. "I hope there ain't no mad bulls about, else they'll have the house down."

Jenifer fingered the shawl, and Mary went on :

"Worked it myself, every stitch."

"You might have bought the wool off us," murmured Minnie, and Nelly murmured also :

"Yes—the wool off us, Cousin Mary."

Mary looked at them.

"A very fine soft shawl, to be sure," said Jenifer. "How you get the time to do all you do, Mary, such a lot on your hands!"

Mary Varwell rolled up her eyes sanctimoniously, and said :

"Them as can make time for prayer, can make time for everything, Jenifer. Our hands be given us to work 'em. Though Arthur don't like to see me work so hard now I'm far gone in the fifties. But plenty of time to play when we get to the Happy Land—that's what I tell him."

"That's what she tells him," Nelly said.

"What'll you play at, I wonder?" laughed Dick. "Leap frog with the angels, I expect—or kiss in the ring!"

Mary ignored him and fixed her eyes on the twins who were sitting together on a long stool, their toes just reaching the ground, and their heels in the air.

"If you two don't get more and more alike as you get older," she began. The twins tittered and looked at each other. "And

you're growing older fast, I see." The twins ceased to titter and pulled long faces.

"Where's Joe?" asked Mary. "Not here, of course? Shameful—shameful—though God knows he's no loss."

"Turned Bolshie, I'm afraid," said Minnie.

"Yes—the wicked rascal—but his bark's worse than his bite. All empty noise. That sort soon turn tail and run when they're up against righteousness. The work of the world's done by good men—like my Arthur—you mind that, Emma," she added, suddenly turning round to Emma, who jumped and blushed, more from surprise than from embarrassment.

"Have he took to work, Mrs. Varwell?" she said, laughing. "Be all the red girls dead?"

But Mrs. Varwell did not hear this, for at that moment Arthur appeared carrying a green parrot in a cage.

"Arthur!" cried Jenifer. "A living parrot!"

"Here we are—me and Akoo-Ko-Ko to wish you a very fine birthday, Aunt Jenifer," said Arthur. "I'll kiss you for him and myself."

"A living bird, Arthur?"

"Very much alive, indeed; Akoo-Ko-Ko, from the Amazon."

"What a darling creature," piped Minnie, poking her finger into the cage, and receiving a nip for her friendliness. "Ow! He bites!"

"He's the living likeness of you, Mary," said Dick. "Got your round religious eyes in his little head!"

But Mary continued to ignore Dick.

"Sure he won't swear?" asked Mr. Major. "These seafaring birds will rap out a bit of old English sometimes."

And Jenifer declared that she would not have him if he swore.

Arthur assured her that he had never been known to use a crooked word.

"A very sweet-tongued bird," said he. "I've taught him to say 'God bless Aunt Jenifer,' haven't I, mother?"

"You've tried," his mother said.

"He said it clear as clear this morning. Listen now. 'God bless Aunt Jenifer,' Ko-Ko."

Everybody stooped round the cage, leaning their ears to hear the parrot speak. Imagine their amazement when these words proceeded in a squeaky voice from the cage:

"Arthur's too fond of the girls!"

Everybody stared.

"Was that the parrot spoke?" asked Jenifer. But Emma pointed to Uncle Dick, and burst out:

"What a shame, Richard! 'Twas Mr. Varwell—I heard him."

Everybody except Mary laughed, and Arthur shouted: "I'll pay you out for that, Uncle Dick!"

"Learn manners from the parrot, Richard," said Mary tartly, and Uncle Dick gave her a sweet smile. She turned her back, which was wide enough to shut out the biggest smile in the world.

"You wait till Ko-Ko's steadied down," said Arthur to Miss Varwell, "and he'll bless you all right."

Jenifer declared that she liked the bird, and knew he had a nice nature. She told Arthur to give him a bit of cake.

"And a drop of port," put in Richard.

"Do it bite?" asked Minnie, and Arthur said:

"No, no. He's all heart, Ko-Ko is. Wouldn't hurt a fly."

They were laughing round Ko-Ko's cage when a sharp, emphatic knock sounded on the outer door, and Jenifer said:

"That's Mr. B., I know his knock."

"Who's Mr. B., my dear?" asked Minnie, and Nelly repeated:

"Who's Mr. B., I wonder?"

"Mr. Baslow," explained Miss Varwell; "my friend and my lawyer both."

This surprised Minnie, who exclaimed:

"Fancy having a lawyer for a friend."

"Ay, fancy!" cried Uncle Dick, who had opened the piano and started to play a tune. "Your old music-box is going home, Jenny."

"Us be going home together," said Jenifer.

"You're going where moth and rust don't corrupt, ain't you, Jenifer?" said Mary Varwell, and Jenifer replied:

"I'm sure I hope so. At the Lord's time, my dear. Not yours."

Mary had no answer ready to that, and Minnie hastened to interrupt the awkward silence that fell, by calling out at Uncle Dick:

"Plays the piano and all! What a man!"

"What a man!" echoed Nelly,

Meanwhile in a corner, Arthur had got Emma

to himself and thanked her for exposing Uncle Dick. Then he said :

“ You ain’t savage with me no more, Em ? ”

“ I never was, Arthur. Why should I be ? ” said Emma.

“ Haven’t changed your mind ? ”

“ No—I ain’t a changer. Very clever of you to think of that bird, I must say.”

“ There’s only one thing I think about, and that’s you.”

“ If you only thought of me——”

“ Never nobody else no more. You could trust me with your life.”

“ I’d be sorry to, Arthur.”

Arthur left her, and she looked after him with mischievous eyes.

Mr. Baslow had entered carrying a large bottle of champagne in each hand. Up leapt Richard, shouting :

“ What do I see—the bubbly ! ”

He seized a bottle, caught Lydia by the shoulder, and cried :

“ Some tumblers, quick ! These acorn cups be no use for ‘ the boy.’ ”

Lydia ran to fetch tumblers. Mr. Baslow bowed to everybody, and said to Jenifer :

“ The top of the day, dear Miss Varwell, and all good neighbours. I’ve brought along a drop of sparkling wine as my contribution to the birthday feast.”

He leaned over the table.

“ What a shower of gifts : ivory, apes, and peacocks ! Parrots and champagne ! ”

" Salmon peel and shawls ! " giggled Minnie.

" Mittens and beads ! " gurgled Nelly,

" Like the Arabian Nights, I'm sure ; tee-hee-hee ! "

" Tee-hee-hee ! Just like the Arabian Nights ! "

" I'm very grateful, Mr. B., " said Jenifer.

" Very grateful, indeed. Never seed such big bottles in my life ! "

" Magnums, Jenny, magnums, " explained Dick. " The real thing, Mr. B. ? "

" The real thing, " declared Mr. Baslow.

" Would I bring Miss Varwell anything but the real thing ? "

Lydia came back with a tray of glasses, and Richard grasped a bottle.

" You'll want a corkscrew, " said Arthur.

" I hope not, " answered Richard, " not if the wine respects itself. But I've got the needful tools. A gentleman's never caught napping on these occasions. "

He brought a pair of wire cutters out of his pocket and set to work.

" And you must venture on half a glass, " said the lawyer to Jenifer.

" Dash it, Mr. B.—why half a glass ? " cried Richard, " she shall have half a bottle. 'Twill lift her up to cope with her dreadful family. "

Mary spoke :

" I've never been able to feel that champagne is a respectable wine. "

" Haven't you ? " said Richard. " Pour a tumbler down your neck, and you damn soon will. "

He thrust a tumbler into her hand, and, after looking at him, she sipped it suspiciously, then gulped the rest.

Jenifer told Arthur to cut the cakes, and he asked if they should not wait for Joe.

"I hope not, I'm sure," said his mother. "Parties don't wait for anarchists, I believe."

"No," answered Richard, "but anarchists often wait for parties."

"Don't you be hard on him, mother, not on a day like this," said Arthur.

She looked at Jenifer, who told everybody to eat and drink and not to wait for Joe. So the men handed round champagne and cake and fruit, and then Uncle Dick approached the piano.

"Now you all tuck in," he said, "and I'll give Jenifer my present."

"I believe Richard's going to dance!" piped Minnie, and Nelly piped:

"Richard going to dance!"

"No, I ain't," he said. "I'm going to sing. My birthday gift's a song, Jenny. A lovely song I got off a tramp—words and tune and all—for a pint of what they call beer."

"Have it got a chorus, Dick?" asked Thomas, who was in the church choir and sang bass.

"A fine chorus, and I hope you'll all join in."

"Oh, that will be nice!" shouted Minnie, clapping her hands.

"Order for Uncle Dick!" cried Arthur, and Nelly shrieked:

"Order for Uncle Dick!"

GENTLY swaying to his own accompaniment, Richard sang, in a cracked but curiously inspired voice :

“ I’m rotten as a bird-pecked pear,
Though only sixty-one, I’ll swear, *
But rather short of teeth and hair—
Sing tooral—looral—lay !
My togs give all the people pain,
My shirt lets in the fleas and rain,
My trousers let ‘em out again—
Sing tooral—looral—looral—lay !
Sing tooral—looral—lay ! ”

And the men and the twins joined in the chorus vigorously, singing :

“ Tooral—looral—looral—looral—lay ! ”

at the top of their voices, Nelly’s squeak being heard above everybody else’s.

“ How d’you like it, Jenifer ? ” asked Richard, turning to his sister, who remarked :
“ Not much.”

He sang the next verse :

“ A pub at every other mile,
By night a shippon, thatch, or tile,
Are all I’m asking from this isle—
Sing tooral—looral—lay !

And when I pass beneath the sod,
To win a harp, or feel the rod,
Oh, let there be a road, my God !—
Sing tooral—looral—looral—lay !
Sing tooral—looral—lay ! ”

This time everybody burst in with the chorus, except Jenifer and Mary Varwell ; and Nelly, quite above herself and yelling with excitement, sang a ‘ tooral ’ after everybody else had finished, and collapsed in confusion, hiding her face behind Minnie’s shoulder.

Uncle Dick twisted round on the music stool and said :

“ He was one of the lords of the earth, that tramp was—though he went in rags and had never worn a collar in his life. No collars for him ! Big ideas—big ideas, like me.”

“ Don’t you know a prettier song than that, Dick ? ” asked Minnie twin, and Nelly twin suggested timidly :

“ A love song, Dick ? ”

“ Come to think of it, I do, Nelly,” he replied, stroking his moustache—a trick he had. “ I do know a bit of a love song ; in fact, more than one. A singer ain’t a singer if he don’t know a love song.”

“ Oh, sing it then, do ! ” implored Nelly.
“ I do love a song about love ! ”

“ So do I, Nelly,” declared Arthur. “ Strike up, Uncle Dick.”

“ It’s called just ‘ Lovers ’,” said Mr. Varwell, and Nelly whispered :

"Just 'Lovers'."

Richard swung round again to the piano, and began :

"They clasp, they kiss ; their troth they plight—
A man and maid at dimpsy light—
She from the dairy, him, the plough,
Eternal, blessed love to vow.

"The narrow pathway through the wheat
Be all too broad for their young feet,
Where side by side, that happy twain,
Whisper the dear old dream again."

"D'you like that better, Jenifer?"

"Yes, Dick—a lot better," she said.

"Such little things still happen."

"I hope they do, Dick!"

"I swear they do," said Arthur.

"I *swear* they do," cried Nelly.

"Ah!" said Richard. "Nelly knows."

"'Tis most pathological," murmured Minnie.

"I shall cry in a minute."

"I am crying!" Nelly declared.

Arthur asked Mr. Varwell where he got that song, and he said he found it in a newspaper when he was lying half drunk on the cliff.

"You'll go drunk to the cliffs once too often," warned Thomas, "and fall over."

"No, Thomas," said Richard. "If I drown it won't be in cold water."

He helped himself to champagne.

"I've earned a drop of liquor now, eh, Jenny?"

"You might have earned a living with gifts

like yours," said Jenifer, "if you'd been a trustable man."

"Now—altogether—my sister's health!"

Everybody rose, held up their glasses, and drank to Jenifer.

"Here's to your eternal home, Jenifer," Mary said; and Jenifer answered, sipping her glass:

"Thank you very much, Mary. Here's to yours!"

Mary subsided with a hiccup.

"And may none of us find ourselves short of a drink when we get there," said Dick.

Minnie began to giggle and flop about, crying:

"It's running to my head—I knew it would!"

"Stop, then! Stop, Minnie!" said Nelly, prodding her to make her stop laughing.

"No heel taps," shouted Richard.

"It fizzes inside you like sherbet," giggled Minnie helplessly.

Mary scowled at her, and presently she leaned her head on Nelly's shoulder and nearly went to sleep.

Mr. Baslow rose up, cleared his throat, and spoke:

"Now I'll say a word, please. Our dear and valued friend, Miss Jenifer Varwell, has lived in Yellow Sands all her life and been an honour to the name; and I'm sure a better thought of woman never did live here. Kind to all and good to all; and long may she stay with us, and may all things go well with her,

as she deserves. May she live to see the young folks grow wiser."

"One for you, Arthur," said Richard to Arthur.

"And put their new-fangled, nonsensical ideas behind them."

"One for Joe!" Mary said.

"May she mark her own good sense reflected in the rising generation, and so I lift my glass to her and hope you'll all do the same."

"Three cheers for Aunt Jenifer," cried Arthur. "She's the biggest sport in Yellow Sands; and I wish her joy. Now, it's your turn, Uncle Dick."

Richard rose, wiped his moustache and began:

"All I can say is that my sister's a very fine lady—a good old Conservative and a credit to her country and her king. She's got her high opinions from me. We're both aristocrats—that's what we are, and we stand for dignity and sense, and England at the helm of the earth, where she ought to be. You can liken Jenifer to a lighthouse—a steadfast mark shining out over the waves—and if you young people steer your little boats by Jenifer, you'll escape shipwreck, I promise you. She'll take her fine qualities to heaven with her, and give 'em something to think about up there too, I shouldn't wonder; and there she'll be greeted with open arms by her fellow Victorians, who'll all be there, every one of 'em."

"Hear! Hear!" cried Arthur, who had been drinking freely, and Mr. Baslow said:

"Now, just a word from Thomas, her oldest friend."

Mr. Major was pushed unwillingly to his feet, and said in his best bass notes :

"I ban't no speechifier, like you men, but this I will say—she's a wonder, and I've got to thank her for many a clever thought and wise word in the last fifty years. She's brave and she's patient, and faithful and hopeful—all very fine things, and not so common as they was. And a lighthouse, as Richard says, as have saved more than one craft from the rocks, to my sure knowledge. She's beyond praise, and she's been one of my best and dearest friends ever since I was a lad and axed her to marry me, and she boxed my ears for doing so."

Thomas sat down amidst a good deal of applause, and Arthur exclaimed :

"What d'you say to that, Aunt Jenny? Speech! Speech from Aunt Jenifer!"

"Yes," said Jenifer, helping herself up with her stick. "I be going to rise up. Such a lot of clever people! I'm proud to hear such things, and I'd be prouder still if they was true."

She sat down again, and beckoned to Arthur, and whispered :

"You bear in mind every word they've told me, Arthur, because I want to hear it all over again to-morrow."

Then she called the twins to come over and talk to her; they amused her. From them she heard about the greengrocer, and the bow

window they had dreamed about, and all their little life. Mary watched them narrowly, and when she had a chance swept them out of the way and took their place beside Miss Varwell. But in Mary's society Jenifer did not expand, and was relieved when Mr. Baslow came up and talked to her about local politics.

"You're always so wise," said he. "I'd sooner come to you for counsel than go to the Prime Minister of England."

"I should hope so," said Arthur. "If Aunt Jenny ruled England, even Joe might be satisfied."

Aunt Jenifer laughed; she was fond of Arthur.

"I be feared Joe ain't coming after all," she said, and Mary snorted:

"Not he!"

JOE had not forgotten his promise to Lydia, much though he regretted it. He spent an hour on the water fishing for dabs before he made up his mind to go to the cottage. From the sea he looked back to the land and a dim sense of its beauty came to him. At this season the combe was lit with the gold of elm and oak and beech, and russet of bracken. Far off in a field he could see men cutting the fern for litter. His boat rocked on the calm sea and for a few moments he forgot his troubles and those of the out-of-works, while the scene, like a picture, reflected itself on his mind. He thought of Lydia; she became mingled with the beauty of the day; the dream of her caused him to sigh, like any other lover. But he was adamant about marriage—and in any case she loved another. His mood grew so soft that the scowl faded off his face. He pulled in to shore, leapt out and drew the boat up the sand out of reach of the tide, and set off for his aunt's cottage. He resolved to be sociable for once, to create a good impression, and to like his relations. But he did not put on his "Sundays."

As he passed the cottage window, he heard Emma's shrill voice crying:

"Here be Joe, Miss Jenifer!" And his

spirit sank a little. There seemed to be a great crowd in the parlour. His entrance was unfortunate. Coming in without knocking he walked on top of the stool where the twins sat, sent them flying into the middle of the room, and shouldered his way to his aunt's chair. The twins screamed. Miss Varwell smiled.

"You be come?" she said, looking at Mary triumphantly.

"I be come because I promised to come," said Joe. "And I wish you all happiness and many good returns of your birthday, Aunt Jenifer."

"Kiss me, then."

He hesitated, then obeyed, saying:

"I wouldn't kiss no other capitalist but you. And here's my gift. You open it when this flare-up's over—open it and read it, if you please."

"The world's got a kind heart for an old woman, you see, Joe," said Jenifer, putting his parcel with the other presents.

"You may think so," answered Joe, whose cheerfulness was rapidly disappearing in this atmosphere, "being well out of the world, but you're wrong. To my certain knowledge the world's got a devilish hard heart."

"Give the Bolshie a drink, Arthur," said Richard. This was fatal; Joe could never stand chaff; the frown gathered between his eyes again.

"Here's your cousins, Minnie and Nelly Masters, come to my birthday party."

"I do hope it ain't true, Joe, that you want to upset the kingdom?" asked Minnie, and Nelly repeated,

"Upset the kingdom, Joe?"

He seized and squeezed their little hands, leaving them like pale limp rags, and said:

"You be the sex that only see skin-deep into everything. But you'll live to know better, I hope."

"What a terror," thought Minnie, wringing her hand, and Nelly thought the same.

Arthur brought Joe a glass of champagne.

"Here, Joe, lap this up," said he. "Mr. Baslow's gift—sparkling champagne—the real thing."

"Take the muck away!" cried Joe, and Arthur drank it himself.

Poor Joe! Why could he not feel here what he had felt outside as he looked up the combe and saw that it was beautiful? He could see nothing beautiful in this people-filled room. Mary made things worse by saying:

"'Tis a pity, since you be here, you didn't bring your manners!"

"'Manners'!" flared Joe. "These ain't no times for manners, Aunt Mary. I ban't a gentleman, be I?"

"No," said Richard. "Don't you worry. Nobody's mistaking you for anything like that. But I'm a gentleman, and your aunt's a lady, so you must try and suit your company for once."

In a corner Minnie and Nelly whispered together,

"A proper anarchist sure enough," said Minnie.

"How his beautiful wicked eyes flash," said Nelly.

"Hush! Take no notice, Nelly."

Jenifer told Joe that she would have no politics on her birthday, and Joe begged her pardon.

"But when people's hungry," said he, "I'd fight for 'em till I was crucified."

"Only very great folks do so grandly right as to be crucified, Joe," said his aunt. "You ain't big enough."

"They won't crucify you," said his uncle. "They'll lock you up!"

"Every true Christian would be locked up in a world like this. There's nobody brave enough to be a true Christian."

Emma thrust a plate of cake under his nose and said:

"You're hungry, Joe. I always know when you're hungry. Eat a nice bit of cake."

He hated her; she and her cake jarred on him more than anything else at the party—she made him look a fool. His mood was spoilt beyond repair. Uncle Dick danced round the room singing.

"When the Princess had no bread, she said, 'Let 'em eat cake then'—so there you are, Joe. You be humble and eat and drink at your aunt's table, and thank the giver."

Joe snatched a hunk of cake, subsided in a chair behind the piano, and ate.

"I do thank the giver," he growled. "She's all right. But 'tis no time for being humble. If you go about axing to be trod on, there's plenty ready and willing to do it."

"Nobody wants to tread on you, Joe," said Thomas Major pacifically. "'Live, and let t'others live,' be a very good motto."

"Live, and let t'others die be the motto in England."

"Don't listen to him," said Mary. "We've heard enough of Joe for the time being."

Joe glared at her and secretly decided not to open his lips again. Lydia was in the room; once or twice she came near to speak to him, but he turned away.

"Look here!" cried Arthur to the twins and Emma. "Dress Aunt Jenifer up in her finery! Then us shall see her in all her birthday gifts. 'Twill be a bit of fun."

They hovered round Jenifer, who was willing to grant her friends and relations this little amusement. They set the scarlet-bowed cap on her head, the beads round her neck and shawl over her shoulders, and the mittens on her wrists.

The wine had gone to Arthur's head, and he danced round like a lunatic.

"Givè me an arm, Emma," said Miss Varwell, "then I'll rise up."

And up she rose, looking magnificent.

"Now you'll see enough red to please even

you, Joe," said Richard. "You scarlet woman, Jenifer!"

"For shame, Richard," said Mary; but the twins were delighted with Richard's wit.

"Oh, my! A scarlet woman! What a scream!" shouted Minnie.

"Oh, my! What a scream! A scarlet woman!" shrieked Nelly.

And in her excitement Nelly whirled round and caught Mary a slap on the bosom, which sent her nearly head over heels.

"Sakes alive!" cried Lydia. "You be a grand sight, Miss Jenifer."

And Minnie said:

"A lordly object sure enough, Cousin Jenifer."

"Every inch a queen!" declared Richard.

"You must see yourself," said Emma.

"You must see yourself, Miss Jenifer."

"There's the big glass up over," said Lydia.

"I'll fetch it down."

She hurried away to fetch it, while the women fussed over Jenifer.

Thomas Major was feeling rather hot, and took this opportunity of saying in a low tone to Mr. Baslow:

"Now's our time to pop out and have a whiff of tobacco, Mr. B."

"A good thought," agreed the lawyer, taking out his pipe. "Miss Varwell doesn't like tobacco."

"Never did—a tidy-minded creature always."

"I won't have no smoking in here," declared Jenifer, her eyes on the pipes. "And you men know it."

"Don't you let the girls get at your port wine till we're back, Jenifer," said Richard. "Minnie's a lush—*you can tell by her nose.*"

"You can tell by her nose!" cried Nelly. "Oh, Minnie!"

"I'll have you up for libel, Richard," shouted Minnie, rushing across the room as Dick disappeared through the doorway. When the old men had gone out, Lydia came back with a large looking-glass which she gave to Richard to hold in front of Miss Varwell. Everybody crowded round her except Joe, who still sat brooding behind the piano. Lydia fell back to make place for the others, and Joe fixed his eyes on her.

"There, Jenifer," said Minnie, "what d'you think of yourself?"

"I'd look grand enough for royalty if it wasn't for my face," said Jenifer, but Minnie declared that her face was "the beautifulest part of her."

"Don't you yield to the lust of the eye, Jenifer," went on Mary, who had a secret dislike of hearing other people admired, especially when their physical appearance was in question. "'Tis what we look like inside to the eye of heaven that matters."

"I'm hoping for a better face in heaven," said Jenifer. "I don't want to spend eternity with this face. Take the glass away."

Suddenly a great commotion occurred. Arthur had fallen out of the circle, and saw Lydia standing by herself near the piano; but

he did not see Joe. He was rather above himself after the champagne mixed with port, and, obeying a cheerful impulse, put his arms round Lydia and kissed her. She was so startled that she screamed. Joe, seeing all, leapt up with a roar, seized Arthur and pulled him into the middle of the room, shouting:

"I warned you, you damned poly-gamist—now you shall have it."

They wrestled. Arthur's coat was ripped up. Mary yelled at the top of her voice. The twins shrieked.

"Separate 'em! He'll kill. Arthur! Come here, you men!" screeched Mary through the window, "Joe's murdering Arthur!"

"Stop it—stop it—my party and all," whimpered poor old Jenifer, thoroughly alarmed. The twins tried feebly to separate the fighters, but they were swept into a corner, where they huddled in each other's arms, panting with terror.

In rushed Baslow, Major, and Dick.

"Ah!" cried Richard. "Joe showing us how to look after the happiness of others."

The lawyer and Thomas separated the young men. Mary was screaming,

"He's mad—like all the Reds! He's foaming at the mouth!"

"And little Arthur bleeding at the nose," said Richard.

Mary flew to support her son, whose face was a good deal spoilt.

"I'll kill him for this," roared Joe.

"I shall faint in a minute," wept Minnie.

"I am fainting," gasped Nelly,

"Bloody hound!" shouted Joe.

"What are you doing, Joe Varwell?" said Jenifer, rising and confronting him.

"Teaching that lecherous wretch manners."

"Four-footed sort of manners yours," said Jenifer sternly.

"'Tis you are the hound," spluttered Arthur, holding a handkerchief to his nose. "You ought to be on a chain, Joe. Nobody's safe while you're loose."

"You'll never be safe—not while there's a decent man left to respect females," said Joe.

"That shows you, Jenifer," said Mary; "That shows you what Joe is! Wicked beast!"

Joe was still trembling with rage and cried at Arthur:

"Next time I catch you insulting a woman, I'll wring your neck—mind that!"

"There!" screamed Mary. "You heard him, Jenifer! Wants to murder his cousin."

"Or any man who done what he done."

"And what did he do, Joe?" asked Jenifer. "What did Arthur do? Perhaps you'll tell us."

"Who was he insulting, Joe?" put in Uncle Dick. "Was it Minnie? Was it Nellie? Details—details, Joe!"

"You laugh, you boozy old fool," cried Joe. "You all laugh! Decency means naught to you. To hell with the blasted pack of you!"

"Leave my house, Joe," commanded Jenifer.

"Begone! You'll break my heart yet afore I die."

"Hearts!" wailed Joe. "You ain't got a clean, honest heart among you."

"March, Joe, if you please," said Thomas, taking him by the shoulder and guiding him to the door. "Out of this!"

And Joe went. The beauty of the day was shattered; he beheld nothing but ugliness, within and without.

“WELL,” remarked Richard when Joe disappeared, “I will say for an anarchist that, when he comes to a party, you always know he’s been.”

“His eyes flashed like knitting needles!” cried Minnie.

“What made him fall on you, Arthur?” asked Jenifer, who felt more distressed than anybody, even Mary, who had been having hysterics.

“I’ll call Lyddy,” said Arthur, “and she can bear me out.”

Lydia had fled to her tiny room under the roof, but when she heard her name being called, she rubbed her eyes with her handkerchief and came down.

“If us hadn’t been here,” said Mary, “Arthur was a dead man!”

“What was you doing, Arthur?” asked Jenifer, and he explained.

“It was like this, then. I saw Lyddy standing all by herself, and I gave her a kiss for luck. I don’t deny it. And this is England—ain’t it? A free country! Can’t a man give a fine girl a kiss without being murdered for it?”

“Joe saw you?” asked Jenifer.

“Well, look at me!”

"And did you kiss Arthur, Lydia?" asked Emma.

Lydia wept and shook her head.

"Dry your eyes," said Jenifer. "You ain't got nothing to cry about."

"Lyddy did not kiss me," declared Arthur. "She hadn't got time. He was on me like the crack of doom."

"Your birthday party and everything," said Mary.

"And everything," Nelly said.

"You'd think I'd committed a crime," complained Arthur, and Thomas replied:

"Joe did think so."

"It ain't no use warning you, Arthur," said Emma.

"All nonsense and only an excuse to slay his cousin," said Mary. "Who's he to preach morals—a murdering Red man like him?"

Dick looked at Mary and said:

"And what would you have done about it, when you were a girl, if a man had kissed you against your will, Mary?"

Mary looked at him, and made no reply.

"Cheer up, Lyddy," said Emma. "Arthur won't try to kiss you no more."

"I'll give up kissing altogether," said Arthur. "It don't pay."

"Hand your coat to Lydia," said Jenifer, "and she'll sew it for you."

"Thanks," replied Arthur, giving Lydia his torn garment. "Coals of fire, I'm sure."

"Joe will take such a lot on him, Arthur,"

said Lydia, almost apologising for Joe, and feeling happier.

"Yes," declared the young man, "he's too busy sometimes."

Lydia took the coat upstairs and mended it as carefully as she could. She felt strangely elated, now that the shock was past. Her cheeks flamed when she thought of what had happened. Joe had fought for her; he loved her still. She grew radiantly happy.

Downstairs, Mary was haranguing Jenifer.

"Now, you've seen what he is, never let that hateful creature darken your door again," she said.

"You said his bark was worse than his bite, Mary," answered Jenifer. "He can teach you how to bite, too, eh, Arthur?"

"He can bite all right," he admitted. "Learned that from the crabs, no doubt."

"Learned that from the crabs," giggled Nelly.

"But it's no matter. I ain't one for grievances."

"There! You see!" flashed Mary. "A proper Christian Arthur is. He forgives everybody."

"Easier to forgive than not," said Emma. "To forgive be to take the line of least resistance. Not but what 'tis right to forgive Joe, I suppose, *and* Arthur."

"Well, my dears," said Jenifer, "I reckon my party's over, and I'll be glad if you'll all go home now, please."

"And a very triumphant party too," said Richard. "Never enjoyed one more."

"Never enjoyed one more," cried Nelly.

"Hark! The mocking bird!"

"Oh, go on, Richard!"

"We'll all go on. I'll see you ladies to the omnibus and tuck you in."

Minnie and Nelly fluttered round Jenifer saying good-bye.

"Good-bye, and God bless you, Cousin Jenifer," said Minnie. "And thank you for your lovely party. We'll never forget it."

And Nelly said:

"Good-bye and God bless you, and we'll never forget it."

They kissed Miss Varwell and promised to come and see her again very soon.

"Now girls—here's an arm for each of you!" said Richard. "You go to bed, Jenny. You've done your bit to-day. See you to-morrow. And look after Joe's present. So likely as not it's an infernal machine and will blow you up, and your parrot, and the whole box of tricks when you open it."

"Good-bye all. Good-bye all!" piped the twins and the three were gone.

Emma had drawn Arthur into a corner and was talking to him.

"You shouldn't have done it, whether or no," she declared.

"All your fault, too—remember that," replied Arthur. "If you'd took a different line back along, I wouldn't have behaved so shamefully."

"There's a lot more to love than love-making, Arthur."

"But love without love-making—what's that? Don't you pretend to be an old maid, Emma, because I won't have it. Leave preaching to Joe."

Lydia came back with the mended coat, and Jenifer smiled and said:

"There—that's good for evil, Arthur."

The youth put it on and smiled at Lydia. Emma told her father to come home; it was time Miss Varwell was resting.

"Surely—surely," said Thomas. "Good-bye, Jenifer, and I'll send that ill-convenient young toad up to-night, to say he's sorry for his sins."

"Don't send him if he ain't ready and wishful to come," answered Jenifer. "That's no use."

Emma kissed Miss Varwell, and she promised to eat a "good dollop" of the fish on the morrow.

As they were going out, Arthur said to Emma: "Good-bye, old maid."

"You think the girl who won't take you be bound to die an old maid, don't you?" laughed Emma, going out.

Unknown to Arthur she had recently refused the hand of the widower, but not because she still dreamed of accepting Arthur's.

After to-day her feelings were not very much inclined to Mary's boy.

Mr. Baslow prepared to leave, but Jenifer laid a hand on his arm and said:

"You bide, please, if you can spare a pinch more time. I'll tell you about my will, while I've got my relations all so clear in my mind."

"A very good thought!" exclaimed Mary, bustling forward and perking up considerably. "You do it this minute! 'Tis Mr. Baslow's beautiful wine made you feel so smart. You go through with it for your soul's peace, and then you can turn your mind to higher things. 'Tis a pity Joe ruined your splendid party in a manner of speaking—born to ruin everything and hurt his family and defy his Maker, and breed trouble, so sure as the sparks fly upwards. I tremble to think what he'll come to. But we must try to forget Joe—there's always dear Arthur!"

She paused for breath, then ran on again:

"And 'tis a pity Richard disgraced himself in company and drank such a lot and sang a vulgar song; but he'll always be the same, poor soul, till a drunkard's grave shuts on him. He chose the wrong path with his eyes open—so all's said. And 'tis a pity they little giggling silly twins trapsed over from Lydmouth, because they be full of money, and don't want yours—and 'tis all stuff and nonsense that the wool trade be going down. And they beads are imitation, Jenifer; you mustn't think they be coral, my dear, because they ain't."

Jenifer, who had been silently listening with a sardonic little smile on her lips, answered:

"So Nelly told me when she gave them to me."

"Did she? I'm glad she was honest. I dare say half-a-crown would have bought 'em. And the Majors—nice people, very nice people—but no kin to you. And I wouldn't touch that fish if I was you—far too rich at your age. Arthur's going to bring you a nice young duck o' Tuesday."

"You haven't forgot one of the relations, Mary—but yourself," said Jenifer.

"I never think about myself," purred Mary complacently. "And 'tis them who don't think about themselves that God A'mighty oftenest remembers."

"No doubt you can safely leave that sort to Him!"

Mary turned to Lydia saying:

"Look after her sharp presently, Lydia, and when Mr. B. takes his leave, you get her off for a nice long sleep. Come, Arthur. The parrot be settling down a'ready."

She kissed Jenifer.

"Good-bye, my dear woman; and may God watch over you and your arrangements."

"No doubt He's got His almighty eye on what I be going to do, Mary."

"Trust Him! Not a sparrow falls to the ground without His will."

"Nor yet a parrot, I expect," answered Jenifer dryly. "He'll know all about my will so soon as I've made it."

Arthur saluted Miss Jenifer and said:

"Good-bye, Aunt Jenny. I'm sorry I jarred the party—and don't think too hard against

Joe. Joe's all right under his prickles. I can kiss you anyhow without getting a black eye for it."

"Good-bye to you both," said Jenifer, "and thank you kindly for your beautiful gift, Arthur."

Mary whispered to Mr. Baslow as they went out:

"Influence her for right, Mr. B. Influence her for righteousness."

And out went Arthur and his mother. Jenifer chuckled a little, and then said rather sadly:

"Very bad for Christianity, I'm afraid, they wonderful people like my sister-in-law. There's nothing worse than some of them good Christians for making you feel a bad one."

She told Lydia to move the presents and set out pen and ink for Mr. Baslow, and to get the will form in the table drawer.

"You're sure you don't feel too tired?" asked the lawyer. "I can come to-morrow at 11.30 if you like."

"Now's the appointed time, Mr. B.," said Jenifer. "Take off these frill-de-dills, Lyddy, and then take yourself off."

Lydia arranged the table, moved the presents, and put away Miss Varwell's cap, mittens and beads. Then Mr. Baslow found Joe's gift, and exclaimed:

"Let's see what the ruffian has sent you, Miss Varwell."

"Open it and find out."

"Not a bomb, I hope. Ah! A book. Well thumbed, and many pages marked. Books can be more deadly than bombs."

"A book, eh? What be it called?"

"The Heart of the Under Dog'. He was the under dog to-day!"

Mr. Baslow laughed unsympathetically, much to the chagrin of Lydia, who hovered anxiously round the book. Miss Jenifer handed it to her, and said:

"You can put the 'Under Dog' with the firelighters."

"Oh, Miss Jenifer!" cried Lydia, dismayed.

"A good place for him," declared Mr. Baslow. "He's lit a lot of fires in his time—the under dog has."

"I know more about the heart of the under dog than Joe does," said Jenifer. "I've seen it!"

"Let sleeping dogs lie, eh, Miss Varwell?"

"Please, dear miss," implored Lydia, "do keep it. 'Twas a great treasure of Joe's. I lay he's given you the best thing he's got."

Jenifer took back the book.

"I'll look at it, then," said she. "The best thing he's got. What's that, I wonder? His heart, I reckon."

"I know he cherished it."

"Why don't he cherish something else as would pay him better?"

Lydia turned away, and the lawyer said:

"The under dog can never be the upper dog, and Providence never meant that he should be."

"Let 'em hunt in packs," said Jenifer.
"All equal—upper and under."

"Even the hounds have their trusty leaders, Miss Jenifer. The ruler spirit is a law of nature."

"Then I wish the Lord would take nature in hand, and larn it better."

She told Lydia to carry the parrot into the kitchen.

"And if he says anything, don't listen."

Lydia disappeared with Ko-Ko, and Mr. Baslow drew forth a fountain pen and said:

"Now, my dear friend, if you please."

Jenifer nodded and stared thoughtfully before her.

Mr. Baslow quoted:

"This is the last will and testament of me, Jenifer Varwell——"

THE weather did not break for another week after Jenifer's party, and those days were spent in the orchards of Yellow Sands. Everybody turned out to gather in the cider harvest. The orchard at Three Elms Farm was heavy with fruit; veteran trees were bowed to the earth with their burden. Under the boughs stood little piles of red and green apples, which rapidly swelled to large mounds. Sacks lolled together stuffed with fruit, and there was a rich apple scent in the orchard air.

Arthur Varwell asked Emma to help him to pick, and she came, with her sleeves rolled up ready for business. While he climbed into the branches, she stood on the lower rungs of the ladder gathering into her apron the fruit that he handed to her. They laughed a great deal and enjoyed themselves. As in the harvest field, Arthur looked his best at work in the orchard, and Emma could not help being drawn to him. But marriage was not in her mind. She had no intention of altering her word.

When Arthur was not in the orchard, he was ploughing. The ground was hard after the dry spell, and red dust rose from the coulter as it cut through the earth. His mother liked him to take his turn with the farm hands, to

set a good example ; but Arthur much preferred picking apples or even pulling roots.

The roots were small this year, but plentiful. Arthur liked to see the fields of bright green mangolds, and sea-green swedes shining in the autumn sun. He would often put up a covey of partridges as he worked and longed to be at liberty to shoot them. The life of a country gentleman would just have suited Arthur Varwell.

He saw little of his cousin, Joe, at this time. Joe was busy fishing for herring and mackerel, and avoided the land as much as possible, and all the people on the land. He had apologised to Miss Varwell after the party with a good grace, but did not go to see her again. Neither did he organise any more-Socialistic meetings in Yellow Sands. He kept his thoughts to himself. Lydia tried to waylay him sometimes, but he turned in the opposite direction whenever he saw her.

Mary Varwell was never tired of trying to set people against him, but in the easy-going community nobody thought it worth while to nurse a violent dislike against a person like Joe—least of all Arthur Varwell—and Mary was never weary of telling her son what a poor-spirited creature he was not to hate his cousin.

"If you was a man, you'd have it out with him, the bullying anarchist," she would say, and he would answer :

"Have what out with him ? He's all right.

I've got better things to do than hate Joe. And if you was the Christian you pretend to be, mother, you'd tell me to turn the other cheek, not hate the fool!"

"Don't you cheek me, my boy," replied Mary. "If I ain't a Christian, show me anyone as is. But there's nothing in the Bible to tell Christians to let anarchists ride over 'em rough-shod."

"Oh, yes there is, mother, and the early Christians were Communists, come to think of it, like Joe."

"Never! No Christian was ever like Joe. And don't you make light of the Word, Arthur, or of me, because I won't allow it."

While life was progressing peacefully and uneventfully in Yellow Sands, the affairs of Minnie and Nellie Masters at Lydmouth came to a head. Something happened so unexpected, that they are never likely to cease being astonished at it.

Miss Tabitha Travers had grown to hate the poor twins, and behind their backs called them a little pair of jackdaws, and did not scruple to be rude to their faces when they met. She did not break her heart, therefore, when news came one morning that Minnie was ailing.

Minnie woke up full of aches and pains, with a cold in her head, and shivers running up and down her back, and poor Nelly sent a desperate message by the milkman to tell Mr. Travers, for she had grown to depend on him a good

deal. Half an hour later, Nelly felt the same symptoms herself, and crept into bed beside Minnie with similar aches and pains.

Mr. Travers was much perturbed and ordered his aunt to go in and see if she could help ; but all she did was to see the maid-of-all-work at the wool shop, and send her for the doctor, for by the symptoms she knew that the twins were down with influenza, and she had no intention of absorbing a germ—especially from them.

But she did not tell William that she had not been upstairs. What she did say was that they were both in a high fever, and that the Lydmouth influenza was a particularly searching kind, and that those over fifty years old had to face the jaws of death, and seldom came out alive. Then William, who had grown very weary of his aunt by this time, snapped out that the twins were only forty-five, and that she well knew it.

"So they say," she said in her level voice that never seemed to rise out of her throat ; "but I dare swear that the baptismal register would tell another tale if you was to look at it ; and be it as it will, them that was born together do often die together, according to the laws of nature."

Then the greengrocer forgot himself and used some strong language to his aunt, and left her smiling at a stomach protector she was knitting for him. And the hateful smile annoyed him more than anything else she had said, or could

say. To revenge himself he took in pounds of his most expensive grapes next door, and also peaches and Jaffa oranges,

He waylaid the doctor every morning and heard the latest news; and the doctor always said that the twins were holding their own. They sent him messages of gratitude for the fruit, and Willie Travers did his best to allay his anxiety. But a dreadful thought, prompted, he was sure, by the devil, would come to him—that if one was taken and the other left, his course of life might run more easily. But when he asked himself which he would choose to be left, he saw that it would break his heart if it were Minnie, or if it were Nelly, that had to go, and the wicked thought was quenched,

One morning as he called in with a hand of Canary bananas and a melon, he was startled to see one of the twins downstairs, cooking over the kitchen stove. He nearly fell backwards with amazement, for the day before they had been reported not quite so well. But he was more amazed still when the figure turned, and proved to be neither Minnie nor Nelly, but a stranger with very much their figure from behind.

This was Miss Ann Pook, a first cousin of the twins on their mother's side, and, at a glance, being near the same height and age, and with the family nose, she did resemble them. But William, who carried the mingled image of Minnie and Nelly as clearly as a photograph in his mind, soon saw that Ann

Pook was different. She was plumper, and she did not twitter. She smiled at William as she accepted his gifts, and said :

"Thank you kindly, Mr. Travers. I've come to look after my cousins till they be down house again and strong, and I've heard a gert lot about you. In fact I've heard of little else since I came last night, and I'm sure I am very glad to meet you, for a kinder man and one more generous don't surely exist. If it hadn't been for your offerings, I doubt if my cousins would have pulled through."

"Very kind of you to come and tend them, I'm sure," replied William, admiring this third member of the Masters clan. "You've had to leave your own family, I suppose?"

"I'm not married," said Miss Pook. "I live alone up the country since my father died. Thanks to him, I haven't got to work, so I was very glad to look after my cousins for a bit."

She ran upstairs with the fruit, and when she came down Mr. Travers was still in the kitchen. He went on making conversation for a bit, but he saw that Ann was busy and could not attend to him just then; so he shook her hand, and promised to call and enquire for the invalids after tea.

When he had gone, Ann heard Minnie calling over the stairs for her to come up; and she found that the twins wanted to hear her opinion of their neighbour. She gave a very favourable one. She was a sensible, far-sighted woman, and had the female instinct for knowledge of

character. Though she lacked the wondrous and bird-like charm of Minnie and Nelly, she had more wisdom than they, and more common sense.

After that day Mr. Travers came more frequently to inquire for the twins, and he would often hear Miss Pook speak a few words on her own account. There is no doubt that she liked him, and found him an interesting talker. But she refused his invitation to visit his aunt next door, having heard a good deal about her from Minnie and Nelly.

She soon gathered that the cousins were much attracted to their neighbour, and he to them. And she felt a good deal of hidden surprise that, though they both loved William, no jealousy showed between them. They asked Ann quite seriously which of them Mr. Travers oftenest inquired after, or if he showed signs of preferring one to the other.

"Because he can't have both," said Minnie ; and Nelly said, sucking a Jaffa orange :

"Can't have both !"

But Ann could not throw any light on the matter. She loved the twins, as one loves children ; they had befriended her in the past, and she was loyal, and knew that they counted on the greengrocer to choose between them when they were well again. But she also knew that William did not set one before the other, or know them apart, and she clearly saw that his efforts to separate them and build up dreams of one above the other were growing fainter.

"In my opinion," she said, "the poor man be like a donkey between two bundles of hay. You might think as male love would find a way to part you, and that the loved creature, whether 'twas you, Minnie, or you, Nelly, would stand out and tower above the other. And with some men such a thing might have happened, and you'd look different to his eye and sound different to his ear; but Mr. Travers ain't one for nice differences like that, and in truth it would want a microscope to tell which was which. Know you and love you as I do, if Nelly hadn't got that passing spot on her chin I'd never like to swear. And the truth is he still don't know you apart, and his manhood shrinks at the fearful thought of doing one a life-long wrong by offering for the other."

"Poor soul!" sighed Minnie and Nelly together.

"Us must plot what to do about it, Nelly," went on her sister. "Us must try to do our bestest to put a gap between us when we're about again."

"—a gap between us," agreed Nelly, "But how?"

"By dressing different?" suggested Minnie.

But Ann pointed out that that could not alter the case, because it was in their very natures to dress alike.

"And when a man's in love," said she, "a woman's clothing be merely an interruption between himself and the precious creature."

The twins were nearly convalescent now,

and able to eat chicken and fish—plentifully supplied by Mr. Travers. The Varwells of Three Elms Farm sent delicacies, and Miss Jenifer Varwell ordered Mr. Major to send mackerel and a crab.

“Us and our illness be growing quite famous!’ laughed Nelly. “People from miles away have heard about us.”

They felt rather shaky when they rose for the first time, and it was a few days before they went downstairs.

MEANWHILE Miss Pook had had a good many conversations with Mr. Travers, and in one of them, the day before the twins came downstairs, the greengrocer said some rather startling things, but not surprising to Ann. Two men had proposed marriage to her before, and she knew the signs. And her conscience tormented her, for it was foreign to her nature to play a double part. As to Mr. Travers' conscience, it did not prick him very much; for he had no idea that the twins really expected him to offer for one of them, and he had never been able to take them quite seriously. He made his views very clear to Miss Pook, at any rate, and before letting him actually propose to her, she went to her cousins, and was frank with them.

They inquired for William as usual, and she said:

"If you must know, my dears, Mr. Travers be growing very vague where you're concerned and terrible clear where I am."

The twins stared, and sat up simultaneously in bed.

"Don't you think I'm in fault," went on Ann, "because I'm not, and God would witness to it; but so soon as he knew, once for all,

that you was both out of danger, and picking up strength so fast as the doctor could wish, he's been inclined to give both of you a miss in conversation. He'll say you're wonders and 'tis a great privilege to know you, and so on ; but, in plain English, he's fallen in love with me, Minnie ! ”

The twins looked at each other, turning their heads with a single thought as they did a dozen times a day. They were far too surprised to speak, and a pathetic expression came upon their faces.

After a silence Minnie spoke :

“ Oh, my ! ” she said, and Nelly murmured, “ Oh, my ! ” likewise.

“ Don't you think it was my fault, my dears, ” begged Ann again. “ Many a time I've turned him off my affairs and kept him to your symptoms and given him every detail of how you was triumphing ; but there 'tis, and me innocent as a lamb unborn ; and if you say the word for me to pack my ' hold-all ' and be gone out of your house instanter, I'll go. ”

They knew Ann Pook for a woman as straight as themselves, and they were really more interested than vexed about it. The shock cast them down for a time, and they looked and felt rather blank, but at last Minnie said :

“ That let's us out then, ” and Nelly echoed :
“ —let's us out—so it does. ”

Then they looked at their cousin with curiosity and wonder.

“ I'm in your 'ands, ” she said to them.

" 'Tis a case for truth and honesty, my dears, and you know me. If you think that by slipping home straightway I can save the situation for you women—one of you—I'm a goner. I warn you that next time the man gets me alone, he'll offer to marry me. I know that. He'd have asked me already if I hadn't gone out of his sight suddenly, thinking of you. And I also warn you that I like him well and would surrender myself to him; so 'tis for you, and only you two, to say whether you'll give him up, or won't do so. With me gone he'll come round and concentrate on you again; he won't if I bide; and if he asks me whether I'd take him, I can't in honesty say I would not, because I would."

"You may be wrong, however," argued Minnie. "He may be only passing the time with you—till us comes back."

"—till us comes back," repeated Nelly, a note of mild hope in her voice.

But Ann knew better.

"Don't buoy yourselves," she said. "That man wants to marry me, if ever a man wanted to marry anybody, and it may be too late, because he knows where I live, and says it's a very unhealthy spot to his certain knowledge. All I can do is to clear out and give you your chance to make good when you're along with him again. And that in justice I will do."

Then Minnie remarked:

" 'Tis a most curious thing how our family gets hold of him," and Ann agreed.

"Most curious," she admitted. "In fact, he said so himself. He went so far as to believe it was the resemblance to you both that first attracted him to me. He said if there'd been but one of you, he'd have offered after the second tea you had together. In my opinion 'tis just because I'm one only, and easily marked out without no complications, that he's drifted to me."

"And another curious thing is how we all like him," said Nelly, who occasionally made an original observation.

"Very curious indeed," admitted Ann.

Then she left them to talk it over, and they twittered together till she brought them their supper. It was clear now to every eye that Ann had been crying about it, not them. They noticed her tears and told her to dry them.

"God's ways be past finding out, Ann," said Minnie, "but whether or no, me and Nelly be come to a sure conclusion that you've got to abide by God's ways. And, in a word, if our fatal resemblance have cast Mr. Travers on you—more in despair than anything else, I shouldn't wonder—then God's will be done."

"God's will be done," said Nelly.

"'Tis one of the things that might be sure to overtake a pair like me and Nelly, soon or late," went on Minnie. "You can see with the eye of the mind how 'tis if a man saw two lights where he only wanted one; and we know they will do so too often after a fresh night; and poor Mr. Travers be dazed between

us and have turned in his confusion to the nearest like us he could find."

"That's what I feel myself, Minnie," answered Ann, rubbing her red eyes.

"It's comforting to me and Nelly in a way," added Minnie, and then Nelly had another original thought.

"'Tisn't as if he was going out of the family," she said.

"Far from it. He'll be next door, and Ann also next door," replied Minnie. "A tower of strength to have Ann next door. And you and me, by God's blessing, still under the same roof. We must cling to that, Nelly."

And Nelly said:

"—cling to that."

Ann hugged them and said they were angels, and then went to her own room to pray for them, and prayed so long that she almost forgot William Travers.

But William had not forgotten her, and begged her to go in and have a talk that evening after his aunt had gone to bed. He had the delicacy not to propose to her under the twins' roof.

She listened, and then she said as severely as she could:

"You well know you was in love with my cousins, and so terrible affectionate to both and so deeply lost to 'em, you couldn't say which you'd offer for first. Yes, you well know it; and then, because they be laid by, you turn to me. A most shameful thing and

shows you be the fast and loose sort and useless to any woman."

William's jaw dropped, his round face grew miserable. She rattled on at him, but the light in her eyes gave the lie to her tongue if he could have seen it. But he could not, and he felt as if the end of the world had come. He rose and turned his back for a moment, considering what to say, when he felt her arms come round him, and her lips on his cheek. Then he heard her say that never in her experience had she seen such another. The poor happy man was so overjoyed that he shed a tear or two.

Later on he had to face Minnie and Nelly; but Ann stood by him when the ordeal came, and the twins kept their nerve and supported each other, and him, in a very forgiving spirit. For they had not really been in love; they had been interested in William, and wondered about the mystery of finding themselves wanted; but deeper than that their feelings had not gone. The thought that Ann had secured the greengrocer and that he was going to be a relation after all, thoroughly satisfied them.

"We're very pleased," said Minnie to William. "We never did like Ann's maiden name, and it will be a tower of strength you being in the family."

And Nelly echoed her.

Mr. Travers was very relieved, and came out like the sun from behind a cloud to beam on all three, and said:

"And I hope, from this day forward, you'll call me 'Willie,' ladies."

And they promised to do so.

Alone together, Minnie noticed that Nelly looked a little down-daunted, and said :

"Never mind, Nelly. Us have got each other, and us'll concentrate on the bow window instead of on Willie. Us'll not rest till us have put up a gert bow window to our shop."

At these words Nelly perked up wonderfully, clapped her hands, and cried :

"A gert bow window—oh, yes !"

NO startling event occurred in Yellow Sands before the winter that year. Nobody was born or married, nobody died, or went away. Even Joe created no disturbance and quarrelled with nobody. It seemed as if the place was going to hibernate for the winter, forgotten by the outside world, asleep. But something happens before long even in the tiniest place.

One November day, Miss Jenifer Varwell called Lydia and declared that she wanted to go out in her bath chair. An east wind blew across an overcast sky, and Lydia tried to persuade the old woman against it, but Jenifer said :

"I want to go, my dear. I'm tired of being indoors all day. I want to feel fresh air, and I want to hear the song of the sea."

"Mrs. Varwell wouldn't think I ought to let you," said Lydia.

"You be in my service, not hers, my dear—and I'll take all the responsibility. In fact I *will* go, Lyddy, whether or no."

So Lydia wrapped her in all the shawls and cloaks in the house, helped her into her chair, and pushed her down the path and out of the gateway to the beach.

Miss Jenifer felt happy. She enjoyed herself

more than she had done since her party. She felt the winter nip in the air, and liked it. She felt the cold wind, and liked that also. It made her feel younger, and as if she belonged to the active world. Lydia kept urging her to go back, but Miss Jenifer refused to turn. Nobody was about and she liked this communion alone with the elements. It recalled her youth, when she would often tramp alone along the cliffs and shore.

"Lyddy," she said, "it makes me feel I be young again."

"Do it, miss? But you'll catch cold if you stop out any longer."

"No, I won't, and I don't much care if I do. I'm enjoying myself."

Suddenly Joe came upon them, and greeted them cheerfully.

"Hullo, you out, Aunt Jenifer?" he exclaimed. "Like you to be so dauntless."

"You and me ban't afraid of the cold, Joe," said Jenifer. "You and me ban't afraid of anything."

"No—us have that in common."

"Push me home, Joe. I be heavy for Lyddy against the wind. You drive me."

"I will then," said Joe, pushing with zest. He remembered the time when Aunt Jenifer asked for Arthur and he sent them both to hell.

Lydia walked beside them, her cheeks blown crimson by the wind, her fair hair flying round her face and whipping her eyes.

They reached the cottage, and Jenifer hobbled indoors.

"Thank you, Joe," she said, "and I hope you'll be pushing something else one day. I've been happy down there on the shore. I shan't never forget to-day."

"Good-bye," said Joe, gripping her hand, "you're the best old woman ever I knew, even though you're a capitalist."

Jenifer chuckled. Joe nodded to Lydia, and went out.

That night Miss Varwell began to shiver, her head grew hot, her nose ran—she had a violent cold; she had a temperature.

"I knew it," cried Lydia to herself. "I didn't ought to have let her go."

As if she read Lydia's thought, Jenifer said:

"Never mind, Lyddy—'tis only a cold in my head. And I tell you it's worth it. Wild hosses wouldn't have stopped me going out to-day—and I enjoyed myself. If us hadn't gone, I shouldn't have met Joe—and I shouldn't have been called the best old woman ever he knew!"

She smiled. Lydia got her to bed, and ran for the doctor. He looked serious. In the morning he sent down the parish nurse. By midday pneumonia symptoms appeared, by the night poor old Jenifer was gravely ill.

"'Tis all up," she murmured to Arthur, who was sitting by the bed. "This be the end. But 'tis a good end—I be ready to go. I enjoyed myself by the sea—I'd never have

felt so happy again if I'd lived to be a hundred. A good thing to die after happiness."

Mary came, but Jenifer would not see her ; she saw everybody else, even the Majors and Mr. Baslow. They took leave of her before she became unconscious. She saw Joe and she saw Uncle Dick. The last person on whom her conscious eyes rested was Lydia, and the last words she spoke were :

"Lyddy, remember this : when they read my will in the room down under I shall be along with 'em. I shall be there, Lyddy."

"You'll be along with the angels, dear miss," sobbed Lydia, but Jenifer smiled faintly and muttered :

"I shall be there."

A few hours later she died.

Mary wanted to undertake the funeral arrangements, but Richard Varwell, suddenly assuming authority, would not let his sister-in-law interfere.

"This be my show," said he. "I'm head of the Varwell clan, and I'm her brother, and I be going to do everything. She liked me, Mary, and she didn't like you—remember that."

"Well, I ain't going to quarrel over a death-bed, 't isn't seemly," said Mary, "go your own way—My turn will come later," she added to herself, "at the reading of the will."

Jenifer was buried in the churchyard up the combe, near a rowan tree. The whole village came to the ceremony, and many people from the neighbouring farms and hamlets. Minnie

and Nelly were there, ready to sympathise with any sorrow after their own reverse ; Mary was there, a mountain of black serge and crêpe. Tom Major and Emma wept beside the grave, Lydia was overcome with grief, Uncle Dick shed tears as the coffin was lowered into the earth. He wore a bowler hat, and his party suit with a black band pinned on to the sleeve. Joe came, in his jersey and sea boots, betraying no more emotion than a deep frown, but feeling much, as Lydia guessed. The same east wind which had given Jenifer both pain and joy blew over her grave and fluttered the garments of the mourners. The feeble winter sunlight shone on the masses of flowers which had been sent to cover Jenifer's resting place. A smell of chrysanthemums was in the air ; somebody had brought a wreath of late roses, and there were sheaves of michaelmas daisies.

When the service was over, the crowd slowly dispersed, lengthening out along the path to the gate of the churchyard. Joe was the first to be gone ; he hastened back to the sea—he loathed the stuffy crowd of black people, and most of all his Aunt Mary, who flourished a handkerchief with a huge black hem. Nobody could induce him to hear the will read. He expected nothing, and desired nothing.

Mary stayed beside the grave, forcing out tears ; the twins wept without effort, aloud ; Mr. Baslow went home to fetch the will.

The reading was to take place at once, according to village custom. He was pleased

to play an important part for once—he, who had never been very important.

At last the churchyard was empty. Jenifer's grave lay covered with flowers, in the quiet place. One could almost hear her saying: "That clears the air. Now I can rest in peace."

LYDIA had run on before the other mourners, to arrange the parlour at Sea View Cottage for the reading of the will. She was weeping as she came in ; the scene was the most pathetic she had known. The blinds were down. The family Bible stood on a little table in front of the fireplace, and a row of chairs formed a square round the room. The parrot, with a bow of crêpe on his cage, was on the window sill ; and an atmosphere of melancholy clung to everything. . .

Lydia pulled up the blinds, and the sunlight streamed in ; then she poked the fire, and going to a cupboard brought out a seed cake and a bottle of sherry, which she placed on the table where the Bible lay. The Book she put on the piano, where the bequests were to be arranged.

Ko-Ko screeched, and she said to him tearfully :

" You and me must be off to the kitchen, Ko-Ko, when I've put the room tidy. She's gone, boy. Us'll never see her no more."

Emma came in to help. She wore a grey dress and black hat, and had been weeping.

" I thought I might lend you a hand, Lyddy," she said, " so I ran ahead of father."

She began moving the chairs.

"A beautiful funeral," she exclaimed. "She'd have enjoyed it!"

"I expect she did," said Lydia. "Thank you, Em. They three chairs belong in the kitchen. I bought that bottle of sherry wine from Mr. Bartlett. Brown sherry always goes with death, Miss Jenifer told me, and gave me the money for it three days before she died. I got the cake this morning at the baker's. Mr. Manders said, 'A seedy cake for a funeral.' And he let me have it for nothing, because like everybody else he thought highly of dear Miss Jenifer."

"They set the chairs in a semi-circle round the big table, and Emma sighed:

"How different from the last time we was all here together!"

"And needn't have died at all, but would go out when the wind blowed east and got to her breathing tubes—and I shall always feel 'twas my fault."

Lydia sobbed, and Emma reassured her.

"Nothing would have kept her in, her said so," she declared. "And it made her happy—she told father how she'd enjoyed it."

"She'd have been cross if I hadn't let her go."

"Shall I put her chair for Mr. Baslow?"

"Oh, no! Leave her chair, Emma. Last words she spoke to me was, 'I shall be along with 'em, Lyddy!' I told her that she'd soon be along with the angels, but she shook her head, and said as she'd be here. And maybe she will."

"A creepy thought, she's here!"

"Not to me. I'd never fear her ghost. I'm sure she'd be just the same as when she was alive."

"She'd have loved the fine crowd at her funeral."

"Yes, and many shedding tears as you'd have thought had forgotten how."

"Father says he haven't seen such a rally of neighbours at a grave since Parson Fortescue was took eight years ago. He's one of the executors to the will, is father, and Mr. Baslow the other. Shall I get a fresh glass of water for Mr. Baslow?"

"No, that'll do," said Lydia, placing a tumbler at Mr. Baslow's place. "Vicar didn't drink none. A triumph for Arthur Varwell."

"Oh yes!" said Emma, tossing her head. "Money ain't everything, however."

"That reminds me, I haven't put out they legacies."

And Lydia hurried about collecting the articles which were down for distribution in the will. She fetched a walking stick, a needle-work picture, a giant lobster in a glass case, and some other trifles, and arranged them on the piano.

"I believe you'd go to Arthur yet, with a little persuasion, Emma," she said.

"Why for should I?" said Emma. "He's got his luck—more'n he deserves, I daresay. He can't have everything—ain't natural."

"You'd soon settle him down if you took him."

"But should I settle down? I want somebody as wouldn't be content with any other girl in the world but me."

"So we all do. He's got a light heart—and that's something."

"A lot too light," declared Emma.

"If you was the ballast——"

"Not me—I won't be no man's ballast—to be cast overboard in the first storm."

"'Tis in the storms the ballast saves 'em, Emma."

"I ain't a missionary. I don't want to save nobody. I don't marry no man to save him. If Arthur wants——"

"And what about Arthur, Emma?" asked Mary Varwell coming in. "Is he here?"

"Not yet, Mrs. Varwell."

Mary began to bustle about and rearrange everything. She unpinned the heavy crêpe veil from her hat, pulled off her black kid gloves, blew them out, and put them folded in her pocket. Then she turned to Lydia.

"Did you put that bit of crêpe on the beehive?"

"Yes, ma'am. 'Tis well known the bees can tell when the master or mistress be dead. I put a morsel on Ko-Ko's cage, too. He misses her."

"Move that chair back a thought," said Mary, pointing to Jenifer's chair. Then her eyes fell on the legacies.

"You've fetched them special things down then," she went on. "She named 'em to

Arthur the last time she saw him. She thought of the least as well as the greatest——” She looked at the cake. “A very small cake,” she said with disapproval. “My sister-in-law wouldn’t like for her funeral nibble to be scamped. However, few will want to eat. Now you get going, Lydia. I’m wishful to speak to Emma for a minute.”

Lydia went out, and Mary addressed Emma, with a good deal of patronage.

“You can stop to hear the will, Emma,” she began, “if you’d enjoy it. Arthur would like for you to be here, and you’re down for a momentum, I believe. My dear departed sister-in-law was very wishful to see you one of our family.”

“Don’t touch on that, Mrs. Varwell,” answered Emma flushing.

“But I’m going to. I want you to understand that, in Arthur’s mind, even his great legacy is dust and ashes compared to you, Emma. That’s love, I may tell you.”

“I’m sure it is. You mustn’t think I’ve got a feeling against him, or anything like that. But I doubt we was ever meant for each other. I want to respect Arthur, and marriage often breeds contempt, Mrs. Varwell.”

“Not with a man like him. There’s nothing small about my Arthur. And if his wise old aunt could put him first, a child like you well might. I’d take Arthur to the Throne of Grace, if I was you, Emma, and ask for light about him. Then you might see your duty.”

"My duty!" said Emma. "If Arthur ain't going to be a pleasure, he's nothing. You don't marry a man like Arthur for duty Mrs. Varwell. In fact, girls don't marry nobody for duty nowadays."

"More shame to 'em. And God help holy matrimony in another generation. What'll happen to it I tremble to think. You'll be sorry for this, Emma. Arthur's virtues are so high as his prospects, let me tell you."

"Life's afore Arthur to prove him—same as it is afore me. We'll go our ways and respect each other, ma'am."

Mary was about to reply rather warmly, when Arthur himself appeared, followed by Minnie and Nelly Masters, in black cotton dresses with tight-waisted coats, their faces buried in handkerchiefs.

Arthur seemed depressed and gloomy. His bowler hat was too small for him, and he forgot to take it off till his mother removed it. He cast a look at Emma, and then went to sit below the window in silence. The sound of the twins weeping could be heard, and Mary snapped out :

"No more, Nelly, please. Put that handkerchief away and dry your nose. There's nothing to cry about. She was a faithful Christian, and her reward will depend, I daresay, on what we are now going to hear. Be sure she did her duty to the end."

"What would you call her duty, Mary?" asked Minnie, looking up.

"The family and the family name. When

Richard goes to *his* reward, which we know only too well, then my Arthur's head of the Varwell race. The name rests with him, and she well knew that."

"There's Joe," said Emma.

"Joe's going to bide single," declared Mrs. Varwell. "And anarchists didn't ought to be allowed to breed in any case."

"Anarchists," murmured Nelly, "didn't ought to be allowed to breed in any case."

"'Tis hard to believe the dangerous likes of him a Varwell," said Mary, and Minnie said:

"The young are always dangerous."

"Not to one another, Miss Masters," said Emma. "Only to their elders."

"To one another most of all," declared Mary.

"He was at the graveside," said Emma, "so glum as anybody."

"But how? In his working things, smelling of the sea. An insult to the dead."

"Miss Jenifer always loved the smell of the sea," said Emma.

Minnie asked Arthur if Joe had made it up with Jenifer before she died, and was glad to hear that he had done so.

"You see," said Arthur, "Lydia was a tender subject. She's an orphan and Joe seems to think he's got to look after her. He always wants to be looking after somebody—only he does it in such a beastly way."

Arthur went and stood by the window and Mary whispered to Emma:

"Go and talk to Arthur. He's a lot cast

down. He'd far rather have his old aunt back in that chair than her money in his pocket."

"So would us all," answered Emma, going rather unwillingly towards Arthur.

Mary grew more cheerful. Smiling at the twins, she said :

"Have you seen the momentums ? "

"No, where be they ? " piped Minnie, also growing brighter.

"On the piano."

Mary displayed to their eyes the woolwork ship, the lobster and the other things. Inside the Bible she pointed out the family tree of the Varwells, and said :

"The family Bible. That'll come to us at the farm, now."

"The family Bible," said Nelly, "will go to the farm."

"What's going to become of poor old Ko-Ko, I wonder ? " asked Arthur.

"I couldn't say," replied Emma. "He'll come back to you I expect with all the rest."

"Never called her by her name, I suppose ? "

"Never, so Lydia says."

"Ko-Ko and me know what it is to be lonely, Emma."

"Well, you've both got a deal to make up for it."

"Little you know! Would Ko-Ko bide a bachelor if he could help it? Any more than me ? "

"Ko-Ko will be down in the will, I expect," chirped Minnie. "I do hope the dear woman

haven't left it to us by any chance. We don't like pets."

"Don't like pets," echoed Nelly.

"They will die and add a pang to life; us don't hold with needless pangs, Nelly and me."

"No needless pangs for us."

"Lyddy says he misses Miss Varwell cruel, poor bird," said Mary pleasantly.

"Who won't?" asked Minnie.

"By God, I do!" exclaimed Arthur, and Nelly cried:

"By God, I do!"

Minnie said to Arthur:

"What's it like to have thousands of pounds and a house, my dear?"

"It won't turn my head," said he. "The thing I want can't be left in no will. My luck lies with the living, not the dead."

"You be hopeful," whispered Minnie. "She's the ambitious sort. All red girls are. Wait till she hears the will. Then she'll change."

"Oh, yes," said Nelly. "She'll change then."

"'Tis time the others were here," said Mary, beginning to feel impatient.

"Mr. B. went home to fetch the will," said Arthur. A silence fell; they fidgeted about; everybody felt a little strained and unnatural. Then Minnie peeped out of the window and cried:

"There's Richard!"

Mary's face hardened.

"A pity he's got to come," she said.

RICHARD came in smoking a pipe, looking extremely melancholy. "Mr. B. not here?" he asked, puffing out a cloud of smoke, which Mary beat away with her hands.

"Put your pipe out, Richard," she snapped angrily.

"Not me," he said. "Jenifer's out of reach of smoke now."

"We've a right to hope so," replied Mary.

"Anyway, it kills the moths."

"Your baccy would kill elephants," said Arthur.

"No jokes to-day, Arthur," warned his mother, and he relapsed into dejection.

"If I don't smoke I shall cry, Mary," said Richard. "I hate to see that empty chair. Naught casts me down like the funeral of a real good woman; they're so damned scarce."

"Good women—damned scarce," said Nelly in a sepulchral tone.

"Be quiet, Nelly," muttered Minnie, nudging her.

"A fine Christian funeral," declared Mary, "and wet eyes wherever you looked."

Richard sat beside the sherry bottle and took out the cork.

"Yes," said he, "less humbug than usual. Real tears—buckets. Jenifer was well loved."

I wept like a child when she went to earth."

He smelt the wine.

"Bartlett's three and sixpenny. She thought of everything."

He drank a glass at a gulp.

"I wonder if she thought of everybody, too?" twittered Minnie.

Thomas Major passed the window, and Mary said:

"There's Thomas. Strange, my sister-in-law didn't make Arthur joint executor along with Mr. B."

"Not strange at all," declared Uncle Dick. "Tom was her dearest friend on earth."

Thomas came in dressed in his Sunday black.

"I was saying," began Mary, "we might have thought my sister-in-law would have looked to her own family for joint executor, Mr. Major."

"She might, but she didn't," answered Thomas.

"Do you know how the will goes?"

"I do not, Mary Varwell. None knows that but Mr. B. and the dead. But I'll lay my life it's a fine orderly will, like everything else she done."

He became silent, looking sadly at Jennifer's chair; Mary Varwell got on his nerves.

"A very solemn event, reading a will," murmured Minnie.

"Specially for them that's left out," put in Richard.

"For them that's left out—oh yes, very solemn for them," said Nelly.

"Always a careful woman," said Mary, "though you couldn't go so far as to call her close. But she looked ahead, and knew you must trust the males to take care of the family."

"She had a great belief in her own sex however," thought Thomas, "though not envious of the men."

"She won't forget the women, I expect," piped Minnie, "because she was one herself, and knows how they be put on."

"Not nowadays, Minnie," said Richard.

"Oh, yes, we are. Man'll always keep the apple and leave us the core."

"And leave us the core—oh, yes!" echoed Nelly. She thought sadly of the greengrocer.

"You merciless spinsters make me shake in my shoes," laughed Richard.

"Jenifer had a very fine feeling for women," said Thomas. "She liked to see 'em coming into their own, didn't she, Emma?"

"Yes, father—same as every sensible woman do."

"The family depends on the man, don't it?" argued Mary. "Women can't carry on their own families. They leave 'em—to carry on another."

"Carry on another—so they do," muttered Nelly.

"Not now," declared Uncle Dick. "The modern girl would sooner carry anything than a baby."

"That's what I say," cried Mary. "Lord,

He knows where the babies will come from in another generation."

"You women will make a corner in 'em and want a fortune for every one," said Richard.

"Is Joe coming along, Mr. Major?" asked Arthur.

"I doubt it, Arthur," replied Thomas. "He's gone out to the crab pots."

"Don't want to look at nobody else triumphing," said Mary.

"Nothing like that," answered Thomas. "But you know his silly views about property. If she left him a five-pound note he'd be put about."

"A very just woman according to her lights," said Dick, "and I dare swear not the least of us overlooked, Thomas."

And Nelly murmured:

"Not the least of us overlooked."

"But there's kind justice, which is mercy," went on Dick, "and unkind justice—which ain't. Justice have mostly got a bitter flavour for everybody when it comes to 'em, and yet we're always yelping for it."

"You can trust Jenifer to mix mercy with justice and make it stomachable," said Thomas.

"Don't you be too sure of that!" warned Richard. "Though each one of us will get something, yet not one may see the justice of his own little lot."

"You expect a bite then, Richard?" asked Mary.

"I expect a surprise, knowing Jenifer. I

bet my hat her justice will look different to each of us. The justice we praise is always the justice measured to somebody else. A will's like a Budget—you can't please everybody, and only a fool tries to. But the wise ones—you and me, Mary—be sure we shan't quarrel with her."

"She told Lyddy she'd be there at the reading, watching over us," said Emma.

"I dare say she will," replied Uncle Dick. He rose, bowed to Jenifer's chair, and said:

"Here's luck and a bit of fun, my old dear."

"Don't, Richard," implored Minnie. "You make me shiver."

"She's in a better place I should hope," declared Mary.

"Neighbouring with the angels," said Thomas Major. "And don't you drink all that sherry wine before Mr. B. comes, Dick. He'll want a drop to wet his whistle."

"Neighbouring with the angels—oh, yes," muttered Nelly, looking at the ceiling.

Mary kept rising to glance out of the window for the approach of Mr. Baslow. She was growing hot and impatient. She opened the windows, then she shut them because of the draught. The room had grown stuffy. The fire which Lydia had made up blazed in the grate. Richard continued to drink the sherry. The twins whispered together; Arthur was silent and gloomy; Emma felt ill at ease. Mr. Major sat in silence, thinking of Jenifer and the past.

"Oh, dear!" cried Mary. "This waiting be getting on my nerves. Wherever is the man?"

"Here he is!" exclaimed Emma.

A moment later Lydia came in, followed by the lawyer, carrying a small bag.

Lydia was going out again, when Mr. Baslow stopped her.

"Don't you go, Lydia Blake," he said.

"You're not forgotten."

"Me, Mr. Baslow!"

"Yes, your kind mistress didn't forget you."

"Come and sit here, Lydia," said Emma. And the two girls sat together near the door.

Mary had risen as the lawyer came in, shook out her dress, smiled importantly, and began arranging where everybody should sit.

"You sit o' Mr. B.'s right, Arthur," she said, "and I'll sit here along with Minnie and Nelly on the sofa, and Mr. Major will bide where he is, and your uncle will sit by the bottle—till it's empty, according to his custom."

Mr. Baslow seated himself at the round table, whereon he placed his bag.

"A very dignified interment," he said. "High and low both there."

"Try Bartlett—his three and sixpenny," said Richard, offering Mr. Baslow a glass of sherry.

"No, Richard, thanks. Sherry never agrees with my big toe. Are we all here, Thomas? I don't see Joseph Varwell?"

"Joe's gone to the pots," said Emma.

"Gone to the pots," Nelly said.

"He was at the graveside?" asked Mr. Baslow. "He helped to carry her."

"Certainly he did," answered Thomas. "But these family meetings ain't much in his line, you understand. Remember last time."

"He's named then?" asked Mary, in surprise.

"She's forgot nobody," said the lawyer. "She went her way and, of course, didn't make exactly the will I should have wished or advised. They never do. When a man or woman's making their will, they'll take the bit between their teeth and be independent for once in their lives. In many cases it's the only independence they ever show. That's human nature; and many a hen-pecked man has pecked back on his death-bed, though he was frightened to do it sooner. I've stopped a good few clients that wanted to strike from the grave. I've shown 'em that just for spite they may be endangering their own salvation. You can frighten some like that. But there's nobody so obstinate as a dying man—except a dying woman. Some leave their money to anybody on earth rather than their own relations!"

"Shame!" cried Mary.

"Others delight to tie it up in such a fashion that we lawyers are the only people who ever get anything solid. Some arrange that their heirs shan't come by the money till they're too old to enjoy it. Human nature again. But Miss Varwell was none of these. She——"

"You sail on, Mr. B.," said Richard. "All very interesting, but not so interesting as what you've got in your bag. Let my sister speak. Let's hear Jenifer."

"You must consider the strain on our nerves, Mr. B.," said Mary.

"Yes," he replied, "your nerves will be strained without a doubt. Things are as they are, however."

He opened his bag and brought out the will. Overcome with nervousness, Arthur suddenly jumped up and waved the cake in the air, saying :

"Will anybody have a piece of cake?"

"Dammy, Arthur, that's what we're all waiting for, isn't it?" cried Uncle Dick.

"Let me have silence then," said the lawyer, adjusting his spectacles.

"Stop twiddling your fingers, Nelly," whispered Minnie.

"I ain't twiddling my fingers," muttered Nelly.

"Yes, you are."

"Ssh! Ssh! Hush, Nelly!" said Mary crossly.

"I ain't twiddling my fingers," Nelly declared.

Mr. Baslow began to read the will.

“THIS is the last will and testament of me, Jenifer Varwell, of Sea View Cottage, Yellow Sands, in the County of Devon, made this 20th day of October, in the year of our Lord, one thousand, nine hundred and twenty-four,” read Mr. Baslow. “‘I hereby revoke all wills made by me at any time heretofore’.”

“She never made no other wills, Mr. B.” said Thomas Major.

“Ssh! Ssh!” hissed Mary, who was leaning forward intently to listen.

Mr. Baslow continued:

“‘I appoint John Baslow, attorney-at-law, and Thomas Major, fisherman, late of the Royal Navy, both of Yellow Sands aforesaid, to be my executors, and to receive five pounds each for the service; and I direct all my debts and funeral expenses shall be paid as soon as conveniently may be after my decease’.”

“She never had no debts,” put in Thomas. “A fussier woman about money——”

“Do be quiet, Major,” snapped Mary.

“It’s all right, Thomas,” said the lawyer. “Only the legal way of putting things. Now, we come to the bequests.”

“The bequests!” cried Nelly.

"Ssh! Ssh!" burst out Mary, blowing into Nelly's face.

Everybody stirred and listened more carefully. Mr. Baslow read on:

"I give and bequeath to Lydia Blake twenty pounds, my mother-o'-pearl brooch, in the right hand top drawer of the chest of drawers, and the book that my nephew Joseph Varwell gave me on my birthday. And I thank her for all her patient kindness to me in the last eighteen months'."

"Oh, fancy, Mr. Baslow!" said Lydia, blushing with pleasure.

"Ssh! Ssh!" came from Mary. "Very generous—very generous. You'm a lucky girl, Lydia."

"To think of me," sighed Lydia with tears in her eyes.

"Twenty pounds! I am glad, Lyddy," said Emma.

"I am glad, Lyddy," cried Nelly.

"Quiet all," commanded Richard.

"'Unto Emma Major'," continued the lawyer, "'my parrot Ko-Ko, the red beads Nelly Masters gave me on my birthday, because they match her hair; the gold chain I've worn round my neck since I was twenty-four, and the battleship worked in wool given me by her dear father, Thomas Major, in 1893, when he left the Navy'."

"Lucky me!" gasped Emma.

"Lucky Ko-Ko," muttered Arthur.

Emma rose and displayed the wool-worked picture, and said:

" 'Twas a dear treasure of hers, I know, and it has hung in this room for thirty years."

" Like her to give it to you," said Thomas. " A very fine object still, if the moth ain't got in it."

" Oh no—'tis perfect, Mr. Major," declared Lydia. " I've watched over it."

" A picture in wool-work, fancy ! "

" Fancy a picture in wool-work ! " cried the twins.

" All my own needlework, ladies," said Thomas. " That's the old *Formidable* to the life ! "

" Ssh ! Ssh ! " said Mary. " We mustn't keep Mr. B. all day."

" There's no hurry," said Mr. Baslow. " May everybody be as pleased as Emma."

" I am pleased then, dear Miss Jenifer," murmured Emma.

" I'd have bought the parrot off you, Emma," announced Richard, " if he'd been called any other name than Ko-Ko. But if there's one thing I hate, it's that disgusting drink."

Mary hissed at him to be quiet, and the lawyer went on: " 'Unto Thomas Major, my affection and respect, and ten pounds for a mourning ring, or other memorial to remind him of his old friend'."

" Bless her heart ! " cried Thomas. " I don't need nothing to remind me. The Lord knows she's took my affection and respect with her up aloft."

There was a pause, and then Richard asked,

"Is the family in sight yet, Mr. B.? Whose turn next?"

"Yours, Richard."

Uncle Dick jumped up, drank a glass of sherry, and seized Nelly's hand.

"Stand by!" he exclaimed. "Wait a minute! Hold my hand, Nelly. Now!"

"'Unto my dear brother, Richard, one hundred pounds——'"

"*What?*" screamed Mary.

"He said one hundred pounds. Bear up, Mary," said Richard, strutting forward and putting his thumbs into his arm-holes. Mr. Baslow went on:

"'One hundred pounds to be spent in cancelling all his debts round about the countryside, and in new clothes, a new hat and new boots—two pairs; but not in alcoholic drink in any shape or form. And I trust to his fine Varwell honour to remember and respect my wishes'."

During the reading Uncle Dick's face had comically altered.

"You've got your bite all right!" laughed Arthur.

"Bit to the bone, sure enough," said Dick. "Oh, Jenny! And not a drop to wash it down with!"

He shook his head at Jenifer's chair.

"You buy Ko-Ko off Emma, he'll remind you," said Arthur. "He's teetotal—Ko-Ko is."

"Two pairs of new boots—me! Have I four feet?"

"I've seen you when you needed 'em," said Mary Varwell.

"So much for Jenifer's justice."

"More generosity than justice, if you ax me," declared Mary.

"But I don't ax you, me darling!"

"When the debts are paid," said Arthur, "there'll be plenty of liquor flying about free gratis, eh, Uncle Dick?"

"There's more to come," said the lawyer. Richard looked hopeful again.

"For me?"

"For you. 'And my love and my blessing to him, and my prayer that he'll pull himself together and use the brains his Maker gave him to save his soul alive, so we shall all meet again in the Happy Land'."

"The Happy Land!" echoed Nelly, gazing upward. Mary heaved her large body against the twins, and muttered:

"Do be quiet, Nelly. You get on my nerves."

"Amen—amen to Jenifer!" said Richard.

"You sign the pledge and chance it, Uncle Dick," advised Arthur.

"Too late for that," said Mary.

"Ah!" exclaimed Dick. "What it is to be a good working Christian. I mean Jenifer, Mary—not you. You're right—you're always right, ain't you, my dear? Too late to sign the pledge now."

"It's never too late to sign the pledge, Richard," said Minnie, and Nellie said:

"Never too late to sign the pledge."

"But there's a time when it's too late to keep it, Nelly," answered Richard. "Get on, Mr. B. Who's the next to catch it?"

Mr. Baslow read:

"I also leave to him the hippopotamus-hide walking stick that belonged to his grandfather."

"Oh Jenifer—Jenifer!" cried Uncle Dick. "And didn't I have enough of the hippopotamus-hide walking stick when I was a poor little boy?" And he rubbed the back of his trousers.

"Perhaps it's a pity you didn't have more," remarked Mary. "Is that all about Richard?"

"That's all about Mr. Varwell," answered the lawyer. "'Unto my cousins Minnie Masters and Nelly Masters——'"

"Us!" shouted the twins, raising their right arms.

"My dear love——"

Mr. Baslow paused.

"Her dear love——" muttered Nelly, looking rather blank.

"Love's better than money, Nelly," said Minnie bravely.

Mr. Baslow continued:

"My dear love, and twenty-five pounds apiece for their nice wool shop at Lydmouth."

"She's going it!" said Mary. "Another fifty off!"

"Fifty off," echoed Nelly. "That's fifty between us, Minnie!"

"Love's all the better for being gilded, eh?" laughed Richard. "Mind, not a penny on drink, you girls."

"*Now* we'll be able to put up the bow window us have longed for!" exclaimed Minnie.

"Oh! The bow window!" cried Nelly.

"Shall Mr. William Catt build it, or Mr. Abel Catt?"

"Mr. William or Mr. Abel? And we'll fill the window with the spring samples. What a joy!"

"It'll shake Lydmouth to the roots!"

"Shake Lydmouth to the roots!"

"If you ladies will let me get on——" suggested Mr. Baslow.

Minnie jumped up.

"I stand corrected, Mr. B.," said she, and Nelly said:

"I stand corrected too."

"Sit down," snapped Mary, and down they sat simultaneously.

"You put Nelly in your bow window, Minnie," said Richard, "and all the world will want to buy her."

"I'd say Mr. William Catt," whispered Nelly to Minnie. "His work lasts longer."

"Won't Willie and Ann be pleased?" whispered Minnie. "A surprise for them, eh?"

Mr. Baslow raised his voice and read on:

"Unto Mary Varwell, my sister-in-law——"

Mary sat up, a self-satisfied smile gathering on her face.

“—the illuminated text which hangs over my bed, hoping that she’ll hang it over hers when I’ve left mine’.”

He stopped. Mary’s face, which had been beaming, suddenly changed ; an anxious look came over it. The lawyer peeped at her over his spectacles.

“That’s not all for mother?” burst out Arthur.

“That’s all, Arthur. I said my say to her. But it was the deceased’s will, you understand, not mine.”

“A damned shame then!”

“Fetch Mrs. Varwell’s legacy, Lydia,” said Uncle Dick.

Lydia went out to do so. Mary glowered.

“One of those little eccentricities that give the living pain, I’m afraid,” said Mr. Baslow smoothly. “You will find few wills without them.”

“I can’t believe she’d have forgotten mother,” said Arthur.

“She didn’t, old cat!” cried Mary bitterly.

“I’m afraid she cherished the conviction that you had scratched her rather often too,” said the lawyer. “The old hear much more than the middle-aged are apt to think, Mrs. Varwell.”

Mary glared at him and said nothing. Lydia came back with a large illuminated cardboard text which Uncle Dick took from her and put on the mantelpiece. Then in a loud voice he read :

" ' And there abideth Faith, Hope and Charity but the greatest of these is Charity.' Well, what's the matter with that, Mary ? "

" The matter is that it ain't worth twopence," replied Arthur.

" There's the face value, Arthur."

" Yes, and the face value's aimed at my character," shouted Mary. " It's a libel from the grave—that's what that is ! "

" You were too different minded, Mary," said Thomas Major. " You and Jenifer saw life too different."

" To make me look a fool afore the family ! "

" You couldn't look a fool, mother," declared Arthur.

Nelly was whispering to Minnie.

" William Catt then, not Abel ? "

" For the workmanship—yes," said Minnie.

" Well, the written word remains," said Richard. " And the Gospel word likewise remains. We're in the same box, Mary—both scored off. But she always smiled on the younger generation."

" I've nearly done, now," said Mr. Baslow.

" Nearly done ! " cried Richard. " You haven't begun yet ! This is Jenifer just having a lark before she settles down to serious business."

He shook his head at the chair, and said gently :

" Heartless old girl ! "

There was a long pause ; then Mr. Baslow read on.

“**U**NTO my dear elder nephew, Arthur Varwell, of Three Elms Farm, Yellow Sands’,” continued the lawyer, “the sum of one hundred pounds, to be paid on the day of his marriage; the family Bible, and the giant lobster in the glass case caught by his grandfather in 1851.”

“Well? Well? Go on——” said Mary, as Mr. Baslow ended.

“That’s all for Arthur Varwell,” said Mr. B.

“My God!” boomed Mary, her chin dropping on her bosom.

“Then who the mischief has the estate? Charity?” asked Richard, much excited.

“Not Arthur?” exclaimed Thomas Major.

“Going out of the family, Mr. B.?”

“Not Arthur?” cried Emma.

“My God!” groaned Mary, staring in front of her.

“Spit it out, Baslow,” said Uncle Dick. Then the lawyer proceeded:

“I appoint as my sole residuary legatee——”

“Mr. Abel Catt!” shrieked Nelly, who was still whispering to Minnie about the bow window. Mary pushed her right off the sofa and she fell on the floor.

“‘Residuary legatee’”—went on Mr. Baslow—“my dear younger nephew, Joseph Varwell,

in the confidence and faith that he will be helped by his Maker to live a wise life, be worthy of his family, keep my house, and do what little he may in reason to right the under dogs without wronging the upper ones'."

"Her very words, ladies and gentlemen—and she would have it just so. Signed, you see, the day after her birthday, and witnessed by my clerk and old Mr. Stringer."

"Joe!" cried Arthur. "Well, that beats cock-fighting."

"After the way he behaved at her party and all!" exclaimed Minnie, shocked out of her own affairs at last.

"Her party and all," echoed Nelly.

"My God!" roared Mary. "Him—the black spot of the family! My God!"

"Yes," said Mr. Baslow to Thomas Major. "I think he ought to hear it in her own words, from my lips."

"Run down to the foreshore, Lyddy," said Thomas, "and find Joe. Tell him I want him—no more than that. He'll be off the water now."

Lydia tried in vain to hide her joy. She ran out crying:

"Oh! I will!"

Her cheeks burned with surprise and delight. She flew down to the beach to look for Joe.

"'Tis human," said Thomas. "Very human indeed—to like that one best who promises worst. Eh, Mr. B.?"

"Very human indeed," agreed the lawyer.

"Poor Joe!" said Dick. "This'll be a terrible nasty knock for him."

"A terrible nasty knock," echoed Nelly.

"Jenifer saw something hid in Joe as we never saw, Richard," said Mr. Major.

"I didn't know the old woman had so much fun hid in her," laughed Richard, rolling over on the bench and kicking his heels together.

"Fun you call it?" asked Minnie, who felt sorry for Arthur.

"What do you call it?"

"My God!" Mary moaned.

"Don't keep saying 'My God!' like the passing bell tolling, mother," said Arthur. "The thing's done."

"And should be undone!" shouted Mary, rising and waving her arms. "Dying people didn't ought to be allowed to make wills. She was past it. A sin and a shame, and us must fight. And 'tis your fault, Baslow," she cried, turning on him venomously. "You could have shown her sense."

"Steady on, mother," said Arthur. "You mustn't say that."

"Think nothing of it, Arthur," answered the lawyer. "I quite sympathise with your good mother. I warned you to expect surprises. Mistaken she may have been, but she was as sane as yourself, Mrs. Varwell."

"To give all to an anarchist, and my son flouted!"

"What does it figure out at, Mr. B.?" asked Richard, and the lawyer replied:

"When costs, duties and legacies are paid, Richard, your nephew inherits round about four thousand pounds, together with this freehold cottage and half-an-acre of ground."

"And why not?" asked Arthur. "Joe's all right. This'll knock sense into him and steady him down—eh, Uncle Dick?"

"True for you, Arthur!" said Richard. "Naught hits an anarchist harder than a legacy. To come by a bit of money honestly is such a shock for 'em that——"

"Malice and hatred—and all hid—all hid!" groaned Mary.

"Steady, mother," said Arthur.

"She'd listen to me time and again and nod her wicked old head. A wolf in sheep's clothing—that's what she was!"

"Don't you say that," thundered Thomas Major, "because I won't have it, Mary Varwell."

Richard pulled the text off the mantelpiece and planted it under the eyes of Mary, who was gesticulating in the middle of the room.

"Run your eye over that, my dear," said he.

She snatched it, tore it in half, flung the pieces on the floor and jumped on them; and it was like a mountain jumping.

"There!" she cried. "That for the text! If there was one living woman who never needed to be told that charity comes first—I'm her!"

"Life's life," said Thomas, "and you must take what comes, and make shift to do without what don't come."

"I won't take no insults lying down," declared Mary, "and more shan't my Arthur."

And thereupon she began to weep, and to have hysterics; she seized the table, brandished it in the air, gasped and gurgled, and finally collapsed into Jenifer's chair, where Arthur rushed to her with a glass of wine.

"Cheer up, mother," said he. "What's wrong, after all? I can't lose what I never had. And there's our farm—naught wrong there. I can work, can't I? I'll cut out Joe yet and die a richer man than him. Money's naught compared to a lot else. I've got a bigger lobster than Joe will ever catch, anyway—eh, Emma?"

Emma had been watching him, and responded smiling.

"Sure enough, Arthur!"

"'Tis nothing to joke about," complained Mary.

"Oh, yes it is—a very fine joke," laughed Arthur. "You wait till you see Joe's face—eh, Mr. Major?"

"That's right, Arthur," said Thomas. "You've took your physic very sensible."

"Getting accustomed to physic, I reckon. This ain't much of a dose compared with some I've had."

Emma continued to watch him; her face grew hot and flushed, and her heart beat quickly.

"Us must soften the wind to the shorn lamb," Richard was saying. "Joe's going to suffer

a lot worse than Arthur. We shall have to hold Joe down over this."

"A great mystery," said the lawyer, "that such a far-seeing woman could hope in that doubtful quarter; but she did. She trusted him."

"Here's Arthur facing his ugly jar like a man; then why shouldn't Joe be brave and face his?" exclaimed Richard. "Money works its own magic."

"What would overtake us if Joe turned it down?" asked Mary with a glimmer of hope.

"Ah!" replied Uncle Dick. "That's where I'd come in—as next-of-kin, Mary! There's hope yet—for me and Arthur—not you, I'm afraid."

Meanwhile Emma had whispered to Arthur:

"Come and see my Ko-Ko for a minute. He'll be lonely out there, poor chap."

"Jolly glad you've got him, anyway," said Arthur. "He don't know his luck yet."

"We'll tell him."

The two young people crept out of the room unnoticed. Minnie and Nelly had been murmuring together all this time, and Minnie's voice was suddenly heard saying:

"There's nothing like a bow window for catching the passers-by."

"I never pass a bow window without looking in," said Nelly.

"Where's Providence?" cried Mary. "That's what I'm axing myself."

"And you ain't the only one, Mary," said Richard.

"The ways of Providence are not as our ways," said Mr. Baslow sententiously.

Richard brought him a glass of sherry, but he refused it. Looking at Mary, he said:

"I'm with you in lamenting, Mrs. Varwell—up to a point."

"Us must work at Joe and help him to see sense," said Mr. Major, and Nelly piped:

"To see sense—oh, yes!"

"You can't see sense if you only see red."

She began walking about, wringing her hands and moaning; Richard glanced out of the window, and smiled.

"Don't you look out of the window, Mary," he said. "There's more yet to shock you in the garden. All a put-up job about Ko-Ko. There's Arthur kissing another girl."

"Not Lydia Blake again?" asked Thomas.

"No—not Lydia this time—a red one. Arthur sees red quite as often as Joe."

"There! I guessed it when she marched him out."

Everyone looked out of the window, the twins being the first to kneel upon the sofa and crane their necks to see what was going on.

"Mark me, Mary," said Richard, "Arthur's going to be the happiest man in Yellow Sands to-night—bar none!"

"She's took him—without the money?" exclaimed Mary.

"That's it!" cried Thomas. "That's

Emma! She's gone to him because the money haven't."

"Human nature again," declared the lawyer, who was enjoying himself. "And Providence on the move after all—eh, Mrs. Varwell?"

"How can he keep her now?" asked Mary, refusing to be consoled.

"He's going to keep her all right," said Minnie, leaning out of the window. "They be hugging beautiful."

"Beautiful hugging, sure enough!" cried Nelly.

"Shame, girls—spying on lovers," laughed Richard.

A moment later Emma and Richard burst into the room.

"I've got her, mother!" called Arthur. "She's come round. She loves me! Good fortune—the best ever!"

"The best ever," squeaked Nelly.

"'Tis 'long of the way Arthur took his bad luck, father," said Emma, embracing Thomas. "I do love him dearly now, and always shall."

"Good for you, Emma," said Uncle Dick. "And didn't Jenifer know? Didn't she know that if Arthur netted the cash, this independent creature would never look at him?"

He shook his finger at Jenifer's chair, and said:

"You deep old bird, Jenny!"

"Kiss her, mother," said Arthur, leading Emma to Mary. "She's going to love you too."

"Yes, I am, then," said Emma, kissing Mary heartily. The mother returned this salute, and patted Emma's shoulder. They sat together on the sofa.

"More work for you, Mr. B.," said Richard. "Marriage settlements—eh, Thomas?"

"Well," said Thomas, "that's between us and Mr. B.—eh, Arthur?"

"The lobster first," laughed Arthur.

"The lobster to go along with Ko-Ko."

"Behave yourself more seemly, Arthur," said his mother; "and her scarce cold in her grave."

"The lobster—scarce cold in her grave?" said Nelly, puzzled,

"No—poor dear Jenifer," explained Minnie.

"Mustn't forget her, who remembered us."

Everybody congratulated the lovers and buzzed round them. Even Mary was pacified a little seeing her son so happy. She and Thomas shook hands. This scene was at its height when Lydia rushed in, out of breath, and cried:

"I've caughted him! Here's Joe, Mr. Major!"

JOE came in scowling and looked about suspiciously. Lydia had told him only that the lawyer and Thomas Major wanted him. He had protested at first, and refused to come, but Lydia persuaded him to do so. Everybody fixed their eyes on him. Facing them all, he said gruffly:

"What for d'you want me here?"

"Because your place is here," answered Mr. Major, "to listen to your bit of the will, Joe. Your aunt ain't forgotten you—nor yet the under dogs."

"Not forgot the out-of-works?" asked Joe, brightening a shade. "Then she read the book I gave her! Have she left any money to the poor, Mr. B.?"

"Well, Joe, she haven't left any to the rich," replied Mr. Baslow. "That's something to be thankful for, you'll say."

Joe took off his cap and sat down in the middle of the group, while the lawyer read:

"I appoint as my sole residuary legatee, my dear younger nephew, Joseph Varwell, in confidence and faith that he will be helped by his Maker to live a wise life, be worthy of his family, keep my house, and do what little he may in reason to right the under dogs without wronging the upper ones'."

There was a silence; Joe puckered his forehead, turned to Mr. Baslow, and then asked:

"What's a residuary legatee? What do it mean?"

"It means, Joe, roughly speaking, about four thousand pounds and this house and its contents."

"It means," said Richard, "that you're a bloated capitalist, Joe—a profiteer, rich with money you never earned—a chap battenning on the sweat of the poor—a rascal with four thousand quid in the bank, who ought to be taken out to the first lamp-post and strung up on it."

"Hell!" roared Joe.

"Order!" cried Thomas Major. "Your Aunt Jenifer believed in you—saw good in you—hoped for you! And if you don't rise to reward her, then shame upon you for evermore."

Joe shook his head.

"Never!" said he, "with my opinions—I won't touch it! Not a penny!"

"If you refuse, Arthur and I collar the lot, Joe," said Uncle Dick.

"Not Arthur?" cried Joe, looking at his cousin. "Not left to you, Arthur? Is it true what these old men be telling?"

"True as Gospel! And I've got something better still," answered Arthur, putting his arm round Emma.

"Four thousand pounds of solid money? Is that the right of it, Uncle Dick?"

"The right, or the wrong of it. It's up to you to show which."

Mr. Baslow cleared his throat and said:

"It was Miss Varwell's steadfast belief, my lad, that if you had a headpiece to match your heart, her money would be safe, and the family name respected. And though you gave her a good few opportunities to doubt, still she trusted you. And there's nothing so obstinate as a trusting woman, Joe. She died in hope of you."

"And 'tis for you," said Thomas, "to make good that hope and honour her name."

"You must—you must—for her fine sake, Joe," begged Emma.

"My future wife, Joe, tells you that," said Arthur.

"And your own. Cousin Arthur tells you that," put in Mary Varwell. "And don't you forget what he's lost, and still can look on the likes of you with kind eyes."

"Easy to be kind when things go right," laughed Arthur.

"Things be very far from right," declared Mary.

But Joe was not listening to them. He stared in front of him, a dark, secret look on his face.

Minnie ran forward, seized his hand, and shook it up and down, saying:

"Shake hands, Joe. You'll be glad to hear your dear aunt left me and Nelly a bow window. And we do hope you'll repay her love by turning a good Conservative."

"A good Conservative," piped Nelly. "Nobody with four thousand pounds put by did ought to be anything else but a good Conservative, Joe."

"And if there's any nonsense," said Richard, "I'll lay my hippo-hide walking stick across your shoulders pretty sharp, Joe."

He flourished the stick, and set most of them laughing. But Joe glowered.

"And I'll set my lobster at you!" shouted Arthur.

"Go light—go light," warned Thomas Major, who knew Joe's temper better than the others. "Don't fool with him. He can't stand it."

He turned to Joe kindly and said.

"You must get used to the idea and face it in a big spirit, my lad. This be the day of your life, remember."

"Bear up, Joe!" said Arthur.

Suddenly Joe thumped his fist on the table and burst out:

"I'm caretaker for the money—that's what I am."

"That's right—'caretaker'," said Richard. "Grasp that and the battle's won. The family name, Joe. The family house, Joe. Your credit, your duty to your neighbour, and your duty to yourself. You can't put yourself outside. You must take your place in the world now, Joe."

"Talk sense to him, Richard," said Thomas. "It's only sense he wants."

Minnie Masters had been edging towards Mr. Baslow ; she was tired of Joe's affairs and had reverted to Nelly's and her own. She tapped the lawyer on the arm and asked :

"When should you say we might hope to touch the money, Mr. B. ? "

"We're very wishful to touch the money, you understand," added Nelly ; "because Mr. William Catt's a gert one for something on account."

"You can safely go ahead, ladies. The money won't be long delayed," the lawyer assured them.

"Then we'll say good-bye, please," said Minnie. "We must step out for the 'bus, Nelly."

They went round the circle shaking everybody by the hand.

"Good-bye all," they cried, "and God bless everybody, I'm sure ! "

"Bless everybody, bless everybody," said Nelly. "God bless everybody, I'm sure ! "

"And you'll come to my wedding, mind," cried Arthur. "I ain't going to wait long."

"He ain't going to wait long," giggled Nelly.

"Us mustn't forget that saint, dear Jenifer, however," said Minnie, and Nelly replied.

"Never, never forget that saint, Jenifer."

Then she whispered to Minnie :

"Abel Catt will hate for William to have it. But along o' William, we're safer."

And out they went into the wintry afternoon, to catch the omnibus to Lydmouth.

"My!" exclaimed Minnie. "I'm longing to tell Ann and Mr. Travers."

They had gone back to calling him Mister again, until he should have become their cousin-in-law.

"They'll be glad for us," said Nelly. "With our bow window and all, it makes up for everything, and I don't want to marry nobody no more."

"Nor me," said Minnie. "I don't know that I ever did, either. If you ax me, 'twas a very good thing Ann came along."

"Yes—a very good thing us caught the influenza, Minnie. Oh, the bow window!"

She clapped her hands.

"God bless dear Jenifer—dear Jenifer," they said more than once as they trundled home over the hills.

Meanwhile, in Jenifer's cottage, Mr. Baslow rose to take his leave.

"If there's anything anybody wants to know," said he, "or wishes me to do, it shall be done. And you'd best pay me a visit, Joseph Varwell, as soon as Mr. Major can spare you. I'm at your service. Good day all."

"And thank you for your trouble, Mr. B.," said Thomas Major.

"Ditto here," said Richard. "The family's much obliged to you, Mr. B."

"Though I shall always say," added Mary, as the lawyer was going out, "you might have influenced her for good. But, I daresay, you knew what would suit your own book best."

"She was like the rest of your sex, Mrs. Varwell," answered Mr. Baslow smiling. "She went her own way and had the last word."

He saluted everybody and went out.

"And a jolly good way—eh, Joe?" asked Arthur.

Joe glowered in silence.

"For Lord's love, Joe, don't look as if you was going to be hung!" exclaimed Emma. "Do smile for once in your young life."

"Nobody's ever seen him smile, Emma. I doubt he can," said Lydia.

"Little you know what this means to me—least of all you women."

"A bit of a facer," admitted Arthur. "But nobody ever accused you of being a coward. You must stand up to it, Joe. You must conquer it."

"He's thinking how to 'blue' it, ain't you, Joe?" laughed Uncle Dick, and Joe said:

"Yes, I am."

"Poor Arthur can't touch his bit till he's married that red girl—a cruel fate for him. Yes—Arthur will soon be an under dog himself now."

"How dare you say that, Dick?" cried Emma.

"Emma's coming home to tea," said Arthur to his mother, "and she wants Ko-Ko to settle at the farm right away."

"You'd best to take the family Bible, Arthur," replied Mary. "And the lobster; and put the creature in the lumber room till

I can handle it. It won't chime with none of our decorations till I've painted it gold to match the chiffonier. And don't you lay anything on top of the Bible, please. Be very careful of that—Wait! Wrap it in the red shawl I gave your aunt. Fetch it, Lydia."

"You ain't got no right to that shawl, Mary," said Richard, and Mary retorted:

"Well, I don't suppose Joe'll want to wear it, will he?"

"Take the shawl and welcome," said Joe. "Take anything. She'd like you to have it back, I expect."

"It ain't for myself. I'll never wear anything she wore."

"Wish us joy, Joe!" said Emma, and Joe turned to her and Arthur.

"I advised Emma against you, Arthur," said he, "and that's why she's took you, no doubt. But I'm glad now she has. She's all right, and, if you behave, she'll reward you, and be a great addition to the family, I dare say. And give a great addition to it also."

"The family!" said Richard. "That's right. Remember the family!"

"There's praise! Thank you, Joe," said Emma warmly.

"He's thawing already, Arthur. Us ought to be the two happiest men in Yellow Sands to-day—you and me, Joe."

"Happy!" groaned Joe.

Lydia fetched the red shawl, and Mary wrapped the Bible in it and gave it to Arthur.

Joe was still thinking of the betrothal, and said seriously:

"I hope it may turn out all right. I'll think of a wedding present if I can."

"I'll remember that, Joe! Thank you!" said Emma.

She went out with Arthur, carrying the ship worked in wool and the red beads, and Arthur picked up Ko-Ko in the hall, and set off with Emma to the farm.

Mary prepared to follow them.

"Don't let this shake your faith, my dear," said Richard. "Things will happen as they must; but there's always our own virtue to fall back upon when the world wounds us. For the rest we must all keep our tempers as best we may."

"Nobody will ever catch me losing my temper," exclaimed Mary, beginning to lose it again. "I never have and never will. Providence can try to make me, but it won't succeed. And nobody else will ever make me, whatever injustice I'm called to suffer."

Her lip quivered, and she went on angrily:

"If me and mine are slighted by the dead, then let the dead be rewarded for it—and I hope she will be."

"You come and have a cup of tea with me, Mary Varwell," said Thomas kindly. "This marriage be going to draw our families together, and I want you to understand that Emma don't go to Arthur empty-handed. I'm a tolerable snug man."

"You're a just man, I believe," said Mary, more calmly. Then she turned to Joe and added:

"And may you be guided by the Lord, Joe—though I've little hope you will be."

She went out with Mr. Major, accepted his invitation to tea, and gradually recovered her nerve and her courage. For, with all her faults, Mary possessed a certain valour and readiness to face life and stand up to the worst, which was altogether worthy. Arthur's engagement pleased her, and she concentrated on that; the settlement which Thomas proposed thoroughly satisfied her, and when she returned to the farm to find Emma still there with her son, she greeted the girl with smiles, and spoke eagerly of an early wedding—a Christmas wedding, because this would have pleased Aunt Jenifer.

"And I doubt if we'd ever have come to it," said Emma, "if Arthur had got the money: so you see, mother, Miss Jenifer knew best."

"Well, well, maybe she did—maybe it wasn't malice—us'll give her the benefit of the doubt," answered Mary. "If Arthur's happy, then I am, and will say no more about it. The Lord knows *I* set no store by filthy lucre. But that Joe should have it——"

"Ay, that's what pricks you, mother," laughed Arthur. "But he ain't triumphing over us, remember that. Because he's big-hearted."

WHEN Richard Varwell and Joe were left together in the cottage parlour, Joe turned to his uncle and said :

"There's two things on my mind now. And this fearful affair's the first. Such a hugeous pile of money didn't ought to belong to one, but to all, Uncle Dick. A terrible thing to happen to a man with my principles."

"Very terrible indeed," answered Richard. "A very nasty reminder of life's ugly ways. Sit down and have a glass of wine."

He emptied the bottle of sherry into his own glass, and exclaimed :

"There ! If they haven't drunk it all ! "

And he finished it.

"Big money ought to do big work," went on Joe, staring before him. "And that's what it shall do ! Big work ! Four thousand, Mr. B. said ? "

"Have you got an idea how to spend four thousand pounds ? " asked Uncle Dick.

"Yes, I have then. I see a way, short and sharp. But I ain't a flyer at figures and you can give me a tip."

"My tip is to sit tight till you get a notion of what the money means. Don't be in a hurry."

"No hurry with a million unemployed ?

Can they wait while I count this cash? I don't know much about capital, but this I do know; my thousands of pounds are going a tidy long way to take off the strain for a bit."

"I see. But remember you must keep the house and be just to the upper dogs. 'Twas her command, Joe."

"The upper dogs can look after themselves. To help the poor don't hurt the honest rich—if there are such people. This money is going to the out-of-works—every stiver—to give 'em a little breathing space and comfort, and find 'em a tidy bit of meat for once, and clothes and boots for their childer."

"Don't talk about clothes and boots to me, Joe," said Uncle Dick.

"They shall have the lot this instant moment. That's the best I can think to do, and I will do it."

"Well, the money's yours. You're free. We'll just find out how it figures out. Where's Lyddy?"

He rose and called through the doorway.

"A pencil and paper, Lyddy! Joe's going to make a new world the day after to-morrow, and I'm lending him a hand."

"Not a new world," said Joe, "only just a bit of peace and comfort for the old one."

Lydia came in with a writing block and a pencil, which she placed in front of Richard.

"That's right," said he. "Now we'll soon get Utopia started on a solid monetary basis, Joe."

"Don't you laugh," warned Joe. "It ain't no laughing matter."

"We'll see if it ain't. Let Lyddy stop and help. Woman's wit will often throw light on a problem."

"She ain't got enough wit to throw on her own problems," said Joe.

"We can often help others, though we can't help ourselves. A man's own self is always the hardest person to help—in my experience."

And Richard sighed.

Joe pointed to a stool, and, said to Lydia sharply :

"Sit there, then, and listen, and speak when you're spoke to, Lyddy."

"Yes, Joe," replied Lydia meekly.

"Now for what these brave figures can tell us," said Richard. "Four thousand is just four thousand and no more."

"And a million men are a million men."

"They are ; but who knows what a million men mean ? My poor brains can't figure a million, Joe."

"Mine can, easy enough," cried Joe. "I reckon 'em in hungry rows with their families behind 'em."

He stretched forth his hand and swept it round the room, gazing at myriads of imaginary figures. Richard began to write on the block and said :

"What do we find then ? One pound is two hundred and forty pennies, and multiply that by ten, you get two thousand four hundred pennies."

"Never mind about pennies," said Joe impatiently. "I don't want no peddling."

"Look after the pennies and the pounds will look after themselves, eh, Mr. Varwell?" said Lydia smiling.

"I'm looking after the out-of-works," declared Joe, "not the pennies."

Uncle Dick proceeded:

"Now multiply by ten again and you find a hundred pounds to be twenty-four thousand pennies——"

"Always pennies," grumbled Joe.

"And since you've got four thousand pounds at your service, you command a regiment of nine hundred and sixty thousand pennies—so there you are, Joe!"

Richard threw down the paper and pencil and said:

"Hand over your legacy to the out-of-works, and there'll be just about enough to give the poor heroes a box of matches all round. Matches, but not tobacco, Joe. And what are matches without 'baccy'? Salmon without cucumber."

"Not a penny each!" cried Joe in amazement.

"Who'd believe it?" exclaimed Lydia.

"If you was to dole 'em out pennies, there'd still be forty thousand penniless, Joe," said Uncle Dick.

"Blast Capital! Not enough?"

"No capitalist has ever got enough, Joe."

"If you can't help all, you can help some, Joe," said Lydia hopefully.

"Woman's wit, you see," laughed Richard. "To help a million all at once, we must look to the rascals who pay income tax and super tax, Joe, and all they scamps and villains who have had the wit to earn big money, or the luck to inherit it. We squeeze the rich for their poorer neighbours—squeeze 'em alive and squeeze 'em dead, and squeeze 'em harder and harder every year, till soon there won't be a rich man left in England. The levy on capital is going on fine, Joe, while everybody pretends it can't be done."

"Do something you *can* do, Joe," said Lydia, and Uncle Dick cried :

"Exactly—a useful stroke for your own near neighbours, here and now. Let charity begin at Yellow Sands, my boy. Since things are as they are, and Communism's no more yet than a bad smell from the north-east, just put what you can do before what you'd like to do, Joe. Don't waste time dreaming—get on with it."

"What if I sent the lot to Russia?" suggested Joe, brightly.

"Oh Jenifer, Jenifer, d'you hear him? No, my son, you build upon our foreshore a good stout fisherman's refuge and shelter—a nice, solid place with its eyes to the sea and handy to the boats, where there'd be a fire burning and a cup of damned, beastly cocoa in winter for every man when he comes ashore. A place of comfort and good cheer for your pals and your fellow-workers."

"You couldn't build a proper brick and tiled refuge for that money?" said Joe.

"Even with bricklayers and their friends in their present mind, it could be done, Joe. You might lift a very fine shelter and look-out for five or six hundred pounds. I dare say the masons round here would take five or six hundred years to build it; but still it can be done."

"The food and drink would pay for itself," said Lydia excitedly, "and a job for an out-of-work woman to serve 'em. I'm out-o'-work myself, come to think of it."

"You shall have it, if you'll chuck this man that's fretting you. A pound a week," declared Joe.

"Steady! Steady!" exclaimed Richard. "One thing at a time. I may take over the shelter myself and serve the cocoa. A fine addition to Yellow Sands we'll have—a good worthy thought for the under dog—especially the under sea dog, eh Joe?"

"Oh Joe! How splendid!" cried Lydia. "And what about Joe himself, Mr. Varwell?"

"Yes—that's right. Now, how about you, Joe?"

"I don't want nothing," replied Joe.

"Don't you? Then you must bend to the head of the family, and that's me. Brains we can't buy you, but you'll do your proper work henceforth as a licensed crabber in your own boat; and presently you'll find work for other workless men who want it."

"That's true," cried Lydia. "There nothing like money to find work for others, Joe."

"By Gor! I believe you're right," he answered. "When it comes to finding work, the first thing is to find wages, ain't it, Uncle Dick?"

"To my simple, old-fashioned mind it looks like it, Joe. The feast of treason and the flow of dole don't find work. A few out-of-works with a good job are better than a matchbox for a million. The business of capital is to make work, Joe, and the more capital, the more work. Try and get that. And meantime, you live here, as Jenifer decreed you should, and grow your own cabbages, and earn your own money, and wait, patient and hopeful, for the bloody revolution to burst upon us in the Lord's own time. How about that, Joe?"

"Oh, Joe! Your own boat and all!" cried Lydia.

He pondered; then he thumped the table and called out:

"I'll do it! I'll build the shelter afore Christmas. I'll soon larn the masons how many bricks a man did ought to lay in a day!"

"Spoke like a damned capitalist, Joe!" laughed Richard.

"And your very own boat, and a bit of work for an out-of-work," said Lydia.

"And that's you, Lyddy," said Uncle Dick. "As to the boat, you have a talk with your master, if I may venture to use the word, Joe. Thomas Major will tell you all about that and where to buy it."

"The shelter's what matters first. I can see it rising, Uncle Dick."

He jumped up and looked out of the window.

"It shall be called the 'Joseph Varwell' shelter," said Richard, "so as your name isn't forgot when you're forgot yourself, Joe."

"No, by God! It shall be called the 'Jenifer Varwell' shelter. 'Twas her money."

"Good, Joe, good! D'you hear that, old sport?" asked Uncle Dick, smiling at Jenifer's chair.

"Miss Jenifer loved the sea and the fishermen. She'll love the shelter, Joe," said Lydia.

Joe had been gazing at Uncle Dick's calculations on the writing block, and said doubtfully:

"Figures can't lie, I suppose?"

"Very easy indeed, Joe," replied Richard. "But they've told the truth in my hands. Figures are honest if you let 'em be."

"I must keep this old house, you say?"

"Most certainly. Varwell property for a hundred years. She bade you keep it."

"Come and live along with me in it then, Uncle Dick?"

"No, Joe. I couldn't live in it; but, just to please you, I'll drop in and die in it some day."

"Don't 'e tell like that, Mr. Varwell. Us won't have you dying," said Lydia. "Us would be lost without you in Yellow Sands."

Joe was silent, reflecting on the weighty decisions of the past few minutes. Then he turned, and pointed at Lydia.

"THERE'S only one thing else for the minute," said Joe—"this girl!"

"Me, Joe?" asked Lydia, startled, and jumping up.

"Yes—you. Bide where you are, and list to me."

She sat trembling on the end of a bench, while Joe went on to Richard:

"Some chap—name unknown—have made her care for him, and now he's hanging off and fretting the woman. And until I've given him hell and taught him manners and dragged him to marry her, I won't rest no more. I thought very well of her myself once, and told her so; but she's after some worthless rip round about here, and he's got to be spoke to."

"Quite right," said Richard. "Don't you stand no nonsense. Your Aunt Jenifer thought the world of Lyddy."

Lydia made for the door, but Joe seized her by the sleeve and said in a loud voice:

"Bide there. I'll see this through to-day and get it off my mind."

"Out with his name, Lyddy," cried Uncle Dick.

"I won't then," answered the girl. "Let me go, please."

"List to me," said Joe, grasping her. "If it's money the man wants to start a home, I can do a bit, I daresay."

"No, Joe—please Joe—let me go!"

"Be all women fools?" asked Joe impatiently, letting her go.

"Far fewer than we think, Joe," said Richard. "Come back, girl. I know the man! Jenifer told me all about him."

"You know the creature?" said Joe.

"Please—please, Mr. Varwell," implored Lydia, rushing forward to stop his speech, but Uncle Dick went on.

"He's quite well-to-do, clean living, healthy. Mad off and on like all of us, but might learn a bit, if Lyddy could spare time to teach him. And he seems to love Lydia in his own queer, damn-fool fashion."

"Then why the mischief do the lunatic hang fire?" asked Joe.

"That I couldn't tell you. But you must find out. As to his name, the silly ass is known round here as—Joe Varwell!"

"Don't you listen to him, Joe," said Lydia, in desperation.

"He won't no more," said Richard. "He'll listen to nobody but you no more."

He took up his hat and stick, paused in front of Jenifer's chair, and said:

"Jenifer watch over you, you poor zanies!"

And then he went out.

"Me! Me!" cried Joe, gazing at Lydia. "Say he's a liar!"

"No, Joe—he isn't," whispered Lydia.

"Oh, Lyddy! Me? And all the world to choose from!"

"But what about your fine ideas, Joe?" said Lydia, fearfully.

"I ain't gone back on one of 'em. The Leaders marry, don't they? And what's a big house all alone? And what's love all alone? I told you I loved you, mind, and I never stopped—hard though I tried. Can I take you in my arms, Lyddy? Will you go so far as to marry me, Lyddy?"

He put his arms round her, and she said:

"If you think I'm equal to you, Joe?"

"Equal to any man as ever lived. And loved me all the time?"

"I did then—long, long afore you chucked me."

"And Aunt Jenifer knew it?"

"She found out somehow."

He squeezed her in his arms and said:

"I'll put up the biggest stone ever was seen in our churchyard to her, Lyddy! I'll lift up one of they huge stone tea-urns on a pedestal."

"She wouldn't like that," said Lydia laughing. "A nice, white marble cross with some of them double pink sea daisies was her hope."

"You'd say the churchyard wasn't the place for tea-urns?"

"She'd a lot sooner it stood on our table."

"Our table!" cried Joe. "And you behind it?"

"Yes, if you please, Joe."

"You dazzling wonder! 'Tis almost too much for one man, Lyddy. I did ought to go shares with the whole world!"

"You ain't going to share me with the world, Joe," laughed Lydia.

"You'd help me to look after the under dogs—the best we can together?" asked Joe, taking her in his arms again.

"No, Joe," said Lydia, leaning her head on his shoulder. "You'll look after the under dogs—and I'll look after you."

For the first time in her experience, Joe's face broke into a smile; he crushed her against him and kissed her.

They sat on together till it was dark, and then Joe rose to depart.

"This is the happiest day of my life," he said. "Do you know that?"

"And of mine," declared Lydia.

"I feel twice the man I was this morning—not along of the money—that's naught—but along of you."

"I lay Miss Jenifer knows," said Lydia, "and she's happy too."

ARTHUR and Emma were married at Christmas time, but Joe and Lydia waited until the spring. Arthur took his bride to London for the honeymoon, and she enjoyed the "sights" with that enthusiasm and whole-hearted pleasure which she brought to the art of living. This was their first visit to the capital. The shops and streets pleased her better than theatres and museums; and she loved to walk along Oxford Street and Regent Street arm-in-arm with her husband, dressed in the fur coat that he bought her on the day after their arrival.

They returned at the end of a fortnight, very pleased with each other and with marriage, and settled down at the farm with Mary Varwell. Mary was not an ideal third in their household, but no marriage can be so perfect that from it are excluded all disagreeable and irksome circumstances. Tiresome people will poke into the nest of the newly wed; they cannot be avoided.

After a time Emma and her mother-in-law adopted a plan of give-and-take, which worked fairly well. Scraps there were, and "words" between them; but, on the whole, life at the farm was serene and happy, and a lot more cheerful than in the old days.

By the time Joe and Lydia were going to be married, in April, Emma felt herself to be an experienced matron, and gave Lydia a few hints.

"Your man's very different from mine, I grant you," said she. "But they're all alike in one thing: they like to have their own way. And you being a clever girl can pretend to give it, when really you do no such thing. Sometimes you've got to be firm and withstand the man outright, but other times it's best to let him get his way, or let him seem to get it. Then they're awful afraid of their health, Lyddy; and if they've got a finger ache, you must pretend 'tis serious and be very sympathetic, but not too much so—not to make the creature soft."

And so she went on and Lydia smiled, and thought that she needed no advice to enable her to manage Joe.

Nearly the whole village went to the wedding, and everybody enjoyed it except the bridegroom, who fairly hated it, and was thankful when it was over. Rice was sticking in his collar and falling down his neck, and his new clothes were uncomfortable. He began marriage in a bad temper; but it soon disappeared when he and Lydia reached the small inn at Portleven, in Cornwall, where they spent their honeymoon. This was a fishing village also—Joe meant to work as well as play. He hated cities, and even towns, and he disliked inland places. So he took this opportunity of visiting another village, and learning all he

could about the life of the pilchard fishers.

He made friends with a fisherman and went out with him one night. Lydia met him at five o'clock on the quay next morning, standing knee deep in silvery fish.

There was no Mary Varwell in her domestic life to fret her, and few people came to interfere ; but in Joe she had enough to occupy all her time and test all her qualities of character, and her life was no easier than Emma's.

Nevertheless each marriage' promised to be a success, and children were born to both of them.

A few years later, Richard Varwell passed Jenifer's grave, and left a bunch of scarlet poppies there.

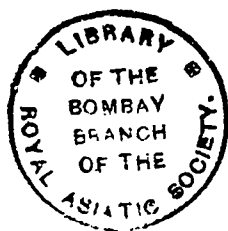
"Do you sleep well, my old dear?" said he, cocking his head on one side. "You did ought to, for it has all fallen out as you willed, and you be responsible for it all. That there will of yours was a masterpiece. Here's Mary growing charitable along of her grandchilder, and Lydia happy with Joe, and Joe saving hard for his daughter already, and owner of three boats; and Minnie and Nelly with the biggest bow window in the world, I should think; and Arthur and Emma bringing up as proper a flock of little Varwells as you could wish for to see, my old bird, and me—and me, well—I don't know about me, Jenifer, but the debts be paid, and my feet in decent boots, and my carcass in a decent suit—on Sundays, at any rate—and for the rest—well, Jenny, I ain't

a reformed character, exactly, but neither have I forgotten your good advice, and I follow it when I may. Good-bye for the moment, my old sport—I'll blow along again presently ! ”

And he lifted his cap—the same he was wearing in the year Jenifer died—and hobbled off to the Wheatsheaf. Arthur was there.

“ Stand me a glass of beer, my son—in honour of your third—no, your fourth, ain't it ? It's going to be a thirsty day,” said Uncle Dick.

THE END





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